

CHALCEDON *Report*

No. 384, July 1997

Christian Reconstruction on the Island of Puerto Rico *plus:* *The Hymenæan Heresy*



Pastor Ralph and Marga Monge

Pastor Ralph Monge's Presbyterian Church in San German



*Pastor
Monge's
Christian
Academy*

The Creed of Christian Reconstruction

Rev. Andrew Sandlin

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A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Calvinist**. He holds to historic, orthodox, catholic Christianity and the great Reformed confessions. He believes God, not man, is the center of the universe—and beyond; God, not man, controls whatever comes to pass; God, not man, must be pleased and obeyed. He believes God saves sinners—He does not help them save themselves. A Christian Reconstructionist believes the Faith should apply to all of life, not just the “spiritual” side. It applies to art, education, technology, and politics no less than to church, prayer, evangelism, and Bible study.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Theonomist**. Theonomy means “God’s law.” A Christian Reconstructionist believes God’s law is found in the Bible. It has not been abolished as a standard of righteousness. It no longer accuses the Christian, since Christ bore its penalty on the cross for him. But the law is a statement of God’s righteous character. It cannot change any more than God can change. God’s law is used for three main purposes: First, to drive the sinner to trust in Christ alone, the only perfect law-keeper. Second, to provide a standard of obedience for the Christian, by which he may judge his progress in sanctification. And third, to maintain order in society, restraining and arresting civil evil.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Presuppositionalist**. He does not try to “prove” that God exists or that the Bible is true. He holds to the Faith because the Bible says so, not because he can “prove” it. He does not try to convince the unconverted that the gospel is true. They already know it is true when they hear it. They need repentance, not evidence. Of course, the Christian Reconstructionist believes there is evidence for the Faith—in fact there is nothing *but* evidence for the Faith. The problem for the unconverted, though, is not a lack of evidence, but a lack of submission. The Christian Reconstructionist begins and ends with the Bible. He does not defend “natural theology,” and other inventions designed to find some agreement with covenant-breaking, apostate mankind.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Postmillennialist**. He believes Christ will return to earth only after the Holy Spirit has empowered the church to advance Christ’s kingdom in time and history. He has faith that God’s purposes to bring all nations—though not every individual—in subjection to Christ cannot fail. The Christian Reconstructionist is not utopian. He does not believe the kingdom will advance quickly or painlessly. He knows that we enter the kingdom through much tribulation. He knows Christians are in the fight for the “long haul.” He believes the church may yet be in her infancy. But he believes the Faith will triumph. Under the power of the Spirit of God, it cannot *but* triumph.

A Christian Reconstructionist is a **Dominionist**. He takes seriously the Bible’s commands to the godly to take dominion in the earth. This is the goal of the gospel and the Great Commission. The Christian Reconstructionist believes the earth and all its fulness is the Lord’s—that every area dominated by sin must be “reconstructed” in terms of the Bible. This includes, first, the individual; second, the family; third, the church; and fourth, the wider society, including the state. The Christian Reconstructionist therefore believes fervently in Christian civilization. He firmly believes in the separation of church and state, but not the separation of the state—or anything else—from God. He is not a revolutionary; he does not believe in the militant, forced overthrow of human government. He has infinitely more powerful weapons than guns and bombs—he has the invincible Spirit of God, the infallible word of God, and the incomparable gospel of God, none of which can fail.

He presses the crown rights of the Lord Jesus Christ in every sphere, expecting eventual triumph.

CHALCEDON Report

A Monthly Report Dealing With the Relationship of Christian Faith to the World

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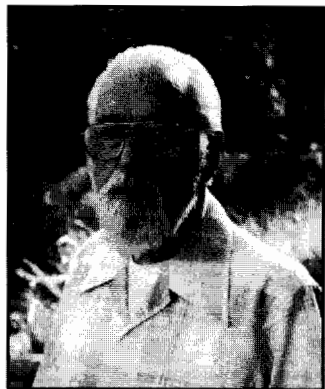
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Snake-Oil Peddlers

By R. J. Rushdoony



In by-gone years, medicine shows featured snake-oil as a cure-all for almost anything. The term has been since used for any nostrum presented as a remedy for a wide variety of ailments or problems.

Our world today has more snake-oil remedies than the old-time medicine men would have dared to promote. Men of the Left and Right and in

between have a wide spectrum of ideas as cure-alls for everything.

Silly trifles are viewed as monumental issues, and they are the heroic Galahads, pure, noble, and unselfish, who seek the holy grail successfully.

A snake-oil remedy might be good for something, but it is a fraud if seen as a cure-all for almost anything. To illustrate, we have many who see our problems as soluble with a return to the U.S. Constitution. Now the Constitution is a very modest document: it gives us no basic code of law but only a set of procedures to maintain representative government, *i.e.*, terms of office, kinds of officers, sessions, etc., nothing more. To expect the Constitution to provide a national character is silly, and the same is true of common law. Morality and character come out of the Faith and the life of a people, not out of documents. I recall vividly the establishment of the United Nations in San Francisco at the end of World War II. It was a depressing event because its founders saw it as the answer to the world's problems. The nations involved came

from a variety of religious and moral backgrounds and had little in common.

It is precisely our lack of sound moral and religious grounding that makes snake-oil remedies so popular on all fronts. At the same time, a fanatic and irrational hostility to one another is commonplace. Everyone tends to demonize other positions and to slander them.

Snake-oil specialists insist on seeing the world as black and white. They see themselves as innocent victims of evil conspiracies. Silly trifles are viewed as monumental issues, and they are the heroic Galahads, pure, noble, and unselfish, who seek the holy grail successfully.

A key value of historic Christian orthodoxy is its insistence that true faith and worship require a continuing confession of sins. The Book of Common Prayer is to the point here:

Almighty and most merciful Father; We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name. Amen.

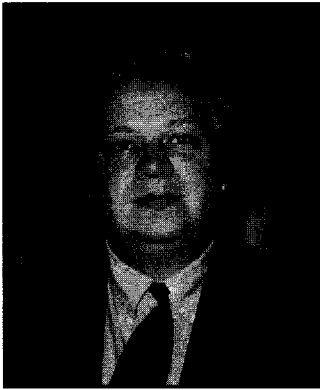
Such a confession gives one humility, and this means not only with respect to what we are, but also with regard to what we do. On all sides, there are too many people in the messiah business, forgetting that there is only one true Messiah, and it is neither you nor I nor any other man! Humility, anyone?

Be looking for a full
report of the Chalcedon
Zambian Conference
this fall.

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Biblical Authority and Christian Orthodoxy

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin



It is a mistake often made by the sincere but naive to assume that affirmation of formal Biblical authority (presupposing the Bible's inspiration and infallibility) guarantees right belief. To this way of thinking, right belief *about* the Bible equals right Biblical belief. Few theological assumptions could be more mistaken. Nonetheless, this was the very cry of the so-called

radical reformers, and eventually the Unitarians and other antitrinitarians,¹ who wanted to pass their heresy off as valid on the grounds of the reformers' clarion call of *sola scriptura*. It was far from the reformers' minds, however, to overturn ancient catholic orthodoxy enshrined in the ecumenical creeds.² They were convinced that medieval accretions to catholic orthodoxy polluted a vibrant Biblical Faith. To them, "Scripture alone" meant "No human authority—including the church—competes with Scripture." It did not mean, "Let's summarily overthrow historic Christianity by a sixteenth-century recovery of primal Christianity in terms of an historically unconditioned reading of the Bible." They were convinced—and they were **right**—that *the Bible requires*, by explication and implication—*historic, orthodox Christianity*.

Where Protestants and Roman Catholics Agree

While the error of much of post-Tridentine Roman Catholicism is to subordinate the Scripture to the Roman sector of the church (which is in no way identical to the church catholic³), the error of many modern Protestants is nonchalantly to cast aside historic Christianity in favor of heretical innovations. Of course, Roman Catholics anathematize Protestants on the grounds that the latter deny the true Faith by denying the church, just as Protestants anathematize Roman Catholics on the grounds that the latter deny the true Faith by denying the Bible. The fact is, while there are clear differences between the two sectors of the church which it would be a grave error to paper over (as, unfortunately, some modern evangelicals have tried to do), historic Protestants and historic Roman Catholics have one thing in common that neither modernistic Roman Catholics nor modernistic Protestants do—*orthodoxy*. Historic Protestants share with historic Roman Catholics what they cannot share with modernistic Protestants; and historic Roman Catholics share with historic Protestants what they cannot share with modernistic Roman Catholics—*orthodoxy*. Beyond catholic orthodoxy—for instance, on the precise nature

of sin, salvation, and the church—they vigorously disagree. But such vigorous disagreement between us historic Protestants and historic Roman Catholics is far preferable to the vigorous disagreement of each of us with modernists and cultists who deny such orthodox tenets as original sin; the Trinity; the dual natures of Christ; his virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection, and bodily second Advent; the physical resurrection at the end of human history; and so forth.

Liberal Protestantism and Orthodoxy

Contemporary mainline Protestantism is almost wholly given over to just this denial, characteristic of modernism or liberalism.⁴ As Gresham Machen demonstrated in 1923,⁵ liberalism is not an extension of or improvement on—or even a deformation of—historic Biblical Christianity; rather, *it is another religion altogether*. It assaults the Faith at its very heart—its supernatural claims—and treats Christianity as a wax nose it can reshape at whim to conform to the modern temper. If influenced by process philosophy, liberals disavow the "static, Greek" conception of God assertedly expressed in the early Christian creeds, opting rather for a "dynamic" view of God, that is, one who exists within and changes along with the world and human history. If influenced by historicists, liberals deny any transcultural doctrinal orthodoxy, holding that all dogmatic and theological formulation (conspicuously excepting their own) is historically and culturally relative: to them, doctrinal truth cannot exist in history. If liberals are radical feminists, the creeds represent a false patriarchal (maybe misogynic) God whom the modern "enlightened" world simply cannot abide. If advocates of Unitarianism, liberals jettison the miraculous element of the Faith—which is to say, they deny the Faith. Liberalism (like cultism) is the antithesis of Christian orthodoxy.

The Inescapability of Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy is a "given," an inescapable axiom, a "that without which it is not possible." As Gerhard Ebeling (not himself orthodox), notes:

[T]he conviction of the preacher which causes him to take the biblical text in hand, that is, that God's word is present and perceptible there, is also transmitted to him historically, specifically through the Christian church in whose tradition he stands. To this tradition he owes not only the transmission of the text as such but also the transmission of the claim of the Bible to unique authority. No matter how much the preacher may have made the acknowledgment of this claim his own, the very fact that this is so and that he steps forth as a preacher betrays his attachment to the tradition of church history. He is baptized in the context of Christian baptism, instructed in the context of Christian instruction, and called to his office in the context of the tradition of church vocation.⁶

Christians of any vocation, not just ministers, do not appear in a historical vacuum, but are enveloped in a Christian context. Even liberal and other heterodox churches retain Christian symbols and language (albeit disingenuously and hypocritically)

because they cannot escape the effects of orthodoxy no matter how hard they may try. For this reason, heretics must presume orthodoxy in order to deny it, just as atheists must presume God in order to deny him.

Orthodoxy and Historical Continuity

The modern temper, however, deeply resents the constraints orthodoxy poses to human imagination. Trinitarian and Christological orthodoxy hammered out in the patristic era was necessary in part because men who professed to believe the Bible could not make certain Biblical statements about God and Christ conform to human reason. In the main, orthodoxy tries to preserve in summary form the Biblical evidence about the nature of God without reconciling it to the bar of autonomous human reason. Thus in the Chalcedonian Creed we learn that Jesus is God of very God and Man of very man, even though this is repugnant to human reason—the Bible, not human reason, is the final authority. *Orthodoxy is Christianity's built-in prevention to autonomous man's attempts to reshape the meaning of the Bible under the pressures of historical change.* That is, orthodoxy is a mechanism of theological, ecclesiastical, and practical continuity. Dismissal or aversion to the creeds of the church erodes this continuity and thus the Faith itself.

Where Liberals and Too Many Conservatives Agree

Oddly, this is a dismissal and aversion both liberals and all too many conservatives commit. Modern liberalism's mad rush to preserve the "relevance" of Scripture and conform it to modernity finds the Christian creeds constricting. But no less do many modern conservatives. An inherited orthodoxy requiring some sophistication to grasp and preventing a theologically democratic free-for-all bores many conservatives who erroneously think *sola scriptura* means the right of every man to decide what he wants the Bible to mean to him (the infamous home Bible study refrain: "Dearie, in that verse what is God saying to *you*?"). Hatch states of the heritage of this way of thinking in our own country:

The first Americans to underscore the right of private judgment in handling the Scriptures were, oddly enough, ministers who opposed the evangelical tenets of the First Great Awakening.... [T]heological liberals became increasingly restive with strict creedal definitions of Christianity.... Well into the nineteenth century, rational Christians, many of whom swelled the ranks of denominations such as the Unitarians and the Universalists, argued against evangelical orthodoxy by appealing to the Bible.... Charles Beecher defended his rejection of his father Lyman's orthodoxy by renouncing "creed-power" and raising the banner of "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible."⁷

This certainly must sound strange to the ears of modern evangelicals and fundamentalists. They are accustomed to hearing that the creeds are "Catholic" (and therefore bad), and that believing the Bible alone assures the right belief apart from recourse to the Christian Faith. Of course, it is never the Bible *alone* they believe, despite their assumptions and protests, because they bring to the Bible certain presuppositions *about* the Faith

and life that shape their understanding of the Bible. A "Bible-only" slogan which avoids historic Christianity is a convenient way to insulate themselves from the evidence of their own misguided presuppositions. The validity of Christian orthodoxy is a much safer presupposition to bring to Bible study than the dismissal of that orthodoxy—and therefore the substitution of a *new*, private, and usually therefore perverse, orthodoxy.

Theological Antinomianism

It was precisely the creed-damning, Bible-only clergy in America's nineteenth century that abetted the erosion of the Christian Faith and therefore Christian culture.⁸ Their ostensible preference for "the Bible alone" in dogmatic formulation actually meant, "the Bible interpreted according to my autonomous, rebellious presuppositions." It is in this sense that modernists are no less sinful than the most ecclesiocentric Romanists and Eastern Orthodox—while the latter two prefer the autonomy of the institutional church, the first prefers the autonomy of the individual mind (or emotions). Just as "heart-felt" conservative revivalism abets a "heart-felt" liberal conquest (because the locus of truth is transferred from objective Scripture and confessional orthodoxy to the subjective human imagination or emotion),⁹ so a creedless conservatism lays the foundation for a heretical liberalism or cultism (because the structured historical dogma designed to delimit Christian belief is abandoned in favor of "individual freedom," meaning *theological antinomianism*). Alternatively, when the Protestants accented the individual priesthood of believers, they meant that Biblical understanding is not mediated by the Roman magisterium; they did not mean that individual Christians could overthrow the Faith once delivered to the saints (*Jude 3*).

Modern Heresy

Today new heresies (actually old heresies in modern clothing) crop up even within the bosom of the orthodox Faith. There are the "evangelical" opponents of Christ's eternal Sonship, the "consistent" (read: heretical) preterists who deny the physical resurrection and Christ's physical second Advent, fundamentalists for whom the humanity of Christ is repugnant and embarrassing, noted "conservative" theologians who question God's omniscience (since it supposedly conflicts with human "freedom"), Pentecostals who duplicate the modalist heresy (God exists not in three persons, but three "modes"), and assorted other varieties. Virtually every one issues from a theological hothouse isolated—and intentionally so—from historic Christian orthodoxy. Every one posits an antinomian dogma under the innocent-sounding guise of being faithful to the Bible.

Twin Truths: Scripture and Orthodoxy

In bold contrast, we must at all times *simultaneously* affirm twin truths: the Bible is the inspired and infallible word of the living God, the only ultimately objective rule of faith and practice; the Bible, not the individual, church, or dogma is infallibly authoritative. *But*, the God who inspired the Bible is the all-conditioning covenantal God who oversees the

preservation of the correct understanding of the cardinal elements of his word in history by means of catholic orthodoxy.¹⁰

We must at all costs honor the Bible, God's infallible word.

But it is not honoring to the Bible as God's infallible word to dishonor Christian orthodoxy.

¹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma* (Chicago and London, 1984), 323-331.

² *idem.*, *Obedient Rebels* (New York and Evanston, 1964).

³ Eugene Osterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, 1971), 40.

⁴ William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, 1976).

⁵ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, 1923).

⁶ Gerhard Ebeling, *The Problem of Historicity* (Philadelphia, 1967), 9, 10.

⁷ Nathan Hatch, "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," in Nathan Hatch and Mark Noll, ed., *The Bible In America: Essays in Cultural History* (New York, 1982), 62, 63.

⁸ On the social effects of creedal orthodoxy, see Rousas John Rushdoony, *Foundations of Social Order* (Fairfax, VA [1968], 1978).

⁹ Peter J. Leithart, "Revivalism and American Protestantism," *Christianity and Civilization: The Reconstruction of the Church*, No. 4, 1985, 51 f.

¹⁰ This is the position of Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1981), 1:114, 115.

Hymenæus Resurrected

By Rev. Andrew Sandlin

And their word doth eat as a canker: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. (2 Tim. 2:17, 18)

What would you say about a professedly Biblical teaching that denies the physical second Advent of Christ, questions or omits the physical resurrection of Christ and the saints, and denies the physical Judgment of the just and the unjust at the conclusion of history?

You would probably call it heterodox and heretical. And you would be right.

Unfortunately, you would not be talking only about the similar error of Hymenæus and Philetus that St. Paul combated almost two millennia ago, but about an innovative dogma gaining wide acceptance in the modern church—even (disconcertingly) in some Reformed circles.

Heretical Preterism

Often termed "consistent" (read: heretical) preterism, this heresy posits that all (or virtually all) Biblical prophecies—including Christ's second Advent and Christians' resurrection—were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, and

that we presently live in the new eon which orthodox believers have always understood to refer to the eternal state. This heresy is promulgated in any number of books, and expressed plainly in R. C. Leonard and J. E. Leonard's *The Promise of His Coming* (Chicago: Laudemont Press, 1996), which this editorial will consider.

The authors assert that only three interpretations about the imminence of Christ's second Advent as displayed in the New Testament are possible: (1) that Jesus and the apostles predicted and expected an imminent physical second Advent but were mistaken; (2) that their teachings regarding the Advent's imminence really do not teach what they seem to teach; or (3) that these teachings do advocate an imminent coming, but not the sort of coming that Christian orthodoxy holds. HP's (heretical preterists) opt for the third view.

The first view they rightly dismiss as unacceptable to any Christian who embraces Biblical authority (to suggest that Christ and the apostles could have been mistaken in any of their Biblical teachings is monstrous). The second view they discard as incorrect inasmuch as, from the HP perspective, it must twist the meaning of Scripture (since the Bible, they assert, so emphatically teaches the imminence of Christ's coming). This leaves only the third view—the HP view: Christ *did* come in judgment in A. D. 70, abolishing the old Jewish order and ushering in the new eternal age. This is the second Advent; there will be no physical second coming.

What does this imply about the final resurrection? HP's take great pains to identify the resurrection of the converted with the progressive victory of believers between the death of Christ and A. D. 70.¹ While they do not necessarily deny a future bodily resurrection,² they do not see it taught in the Bible. In other words, the Bible does not give hope of a bodily resurrection: "Even the concept of the flesh, to be transformed in the final day, might have a meaning other than that of the physical human body, when examined according to its theological usage in the New Testament."³ To HP's, the final day is past.

The reason HP enjoys an aura of respectability is that it can point to certain predictions whose fulfillment was most likely in A. D. 70 and to texts which posit the intrusion of the eternal eschatological realities back into the present age. For instance, it is hard to imagine that the coming of Christ predicted in Mt. 26:64 and Mk. 14:61, 62 refers to the second Advent, or that certain portions of Mt. 24 (note vv. 30-34) do not pertain to the destruction of Jerusalem. As Boettner notes, "The Scriptures clearly represent Christ as coming in some manifestations to the people of his own generation and to later generations; and they just as clearly set forth His Coming in glory and judgment at the end of the age. . . . [T]he New Testament does not draw a sharp distinction between the partial, preliminary comings and the final Coming."⁴ The coming of Christ does not always refer to the second Advent, and sometimes does refer to Christ's coming in judgment on apostate Israel in A. D. 70.

The fact that *some* New Testament texts may be understood preteristically, however, is no warrant that they must *all* must be so understood (*Mt. 25:31f.*; *1 Cor. 1:7, 8*; *1 Thes. 2:19; 3:13*;

4:16, 17; 5:23; 2 Thes. 1:7-10; 2:8; Jas. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:4; 1 Jn. 2:28). To contend that they must is to make Biblical exegesis the captive of systematic theology. Biblical exegesis is the captive of God and Christian orthodoxy, not systematic theology. Using the terminology of Thomas Kuhn, both exegesis and systematics are “normal science” that operate within a “paradigm.”⁵ For Christians, that unshakable paradigm is the Christian Faith. Sadly, the HP’s are quite willing to assault the Christian paradigm. How?

First, they hold that the end of history as the Bible depicts it has already occurred. It is imperative for the HP view to interpret the “world” or “age” whose end the Bible predicts as the old apostate Jewish order.⁶ They hold that Christ returned at the end of the world (age), but that the end of the age occurred in A. D. 70: “[S]ince they [orthodox Christians] believe the end predicted in the New Testament to be the end of the world as we understand it—including, for many, the end of the physical globe—it does not occur to them that the end might already have taken place.”⁷ Since, nonetheless, the general resurrection is associated chronologically with the second Advent of Christ, it too, in their view, must be a *fait accompli*: “From the New Testament’s point of view the resurrection, unlike the parousia, does not await fulfillment but is an accomplished fact of God’s redemptive history. . . . [T]he resurrection is *progressive*: it does not take place all at once, but is a process at work in the eschatological community during the last-days transition period when the age of the old covenant overlaps that of the new. . . . The resurrection is the reward of that body of believers which, holding to the testimony of Jesus through the last days, emerged from the events of those days as the vindicated remnant of Israel, the true covenant community.”⁸ This resurrection of the believers occurs, according to the authors, in the era between Christ’s ministry, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the old covenant order. The authors remind us of texts like Rom. 6:3-5, 8:9-11 and Phil. 3:10-13 which associate the believer’s resurrection in his present life with Christ’s definitive resurrection. The theological corollary, according to the Leonards, is that

for the New Testament writers, the resurrection is an ongoing process. It corresponds to the fulfillment in Christ of God’s promises to Israel during the last days of the old covenant period. Resurrection is accomplished “by the Spirit” and is a progressive overcoming of sin-death. Because sin-death, according to Paul, is the state of those who are under the Judaic law, resurrection is the condition of being freed from that religious order and occurs at the time this freedom is realized.... It belongs to the transition from the covenant age of the Law to the new covenant age.⁹

The Orthodox Response

What do we say to this? It is not my intention here to exegetically refute the hyperpreterist heresy—Ken Gentry’s and Jim West’s articles in the present issue address the heresy from an exegetical standpoint. I will, though, mention three severe exegetical or theological flaws in the HP thesis.

First, the fact that regeneration and sanctification are labeled or identified as resurrection in the Bible does not require that

they be exclusively so understood. Imagine my saying that since death in the Bible is identified with the sinner’s walking in the depraved preredemptive order (*Eph. 2:1*) as well as with the Christian’s cessation of existence in that order (*1 Jn. 3:14*), there is no such thing as physical death taught in the Bible! The HP reduction of the Biblical meaning of resurrection is not materially different from that which makes death mean *only* a form of spiritual death. The fact that resurrection can denote both regeneration and sanctification (as well as other states) is no evidence that it cannot denote physical resurrection, its prime denotation.

Second, the HP denial that Christ’s coming is a physical event cannot do justice to texts like Ac. 1:11 whose most obvious sense is that Christ will return to earth in a discrete, physical body. The HP’s are intent to argue that they do not deny the second Advent, only a second Advent after A. D. 70. This is at best disingenuous, and at worse deceptive. They do not believe in a physical second Advent of *any* kind. The heresy is less in claiming that it is past—though this too is heresy—than in claiming it is not physical.

Conservatives—especially evangelicals—look on the Christian past and the theology it generated as “too Catholic” or “too Protestant” and not sufficiently Biblical.

Perhaps the most inconceivable and tortuous exegesis of the Leonards’ entire book is that which concludes that the rapture of 1 Thes. 4:17 may very well refer to the first-century’s Christians’ death [!].¹⁰ The very problem Paul addresses is the concern of the Thessalonians that they may never see their (physically!) dead brethren again. To argue that seeing their brethren again in the “death of the rapture” is Paul’s comfort makes nonsense of the passage. The descent of the Lord with the saints will include the snatching away of both those remaining alive in him, and the “dead in Christ” who rise first (v. 16). If the rapture denotes (physical) death, *to whom does “the dead in Christ” refer?* In v. 17, who are those who “are alive and remain”? If the rapture is nothing but physical death, why the differentiation between the dead in Christ and the living who remain? If the rapture denotes death, why should Christ return for those who are *already* dead? This makes no sense on the hyperpreterist thesis, but does pose a severe embarrassment. Even if v. 16 is taken to refer to the coming in judgment of A. D. 70, it could never plausibly be argued that all those who were alive during that era were “raptured by death” to rejoin their deceased brethren. In any case, who are the “dead in Christ”

that are to rise at the destruction of Jerusalem? The entire HP suggestion is senseless.

Third, the definition of the resurrection of the just as a progressive evolution in victory from the old to the new covenant order in A. D. 33-70 leaves the issue of the resurrection of the *unjust* conspicuously missing. But the very passages that speak of the resurrection of the just speak no less emphatically of the resurrection of the unconverted (*e.g., Ac. 24:15*). Only if the resurrection of the unjust means a future, definitive physical resurrection to condemnation and the resurrection of the just means a future, definitive physical resurrection to life eternal can we do justice to the very meaning of the resurrection of both just and unjust.

Additionally, in John 11:23f. Jesus links the resurrection of regeneration with the physical resurrection at the last day. In other words, the resurrection of regeneration constitutes the earnest of the resurrection of the physical body which will occur at the end of history. Had Jesus wished to identify the resurrection of regeneration exclusively as a progressive, non-physical resurrection between A. D. 33 and 70, he missed a golden opportunity. Rather, he claimed that the eternal life consummated at the final physical resurrection is an essential effect of the resurrection of regeneration in time and history. The very discussion of resurrection about a *physically* dead man (whom he soon *physically* resurrected) implies a *physical* resurrection. He did not refute Mary's notion that physical resurrection occurs at the last day. He wanted her to know that physical resurrection to life must be preceded by the spiritual resurrection of regeneration. This passage refutes the HP notion of a gradual, spiritual, final resurrection.

The Subversion of Christian Orthodoxy

There are other insurmountable problems with HP. I wish to confront this heresy from a different angle, however—its utter disregard for the eschatological tenets of creedal orthodoxy and therefore historic Christianity. *This heresy asks us to assume that virtually the entire testimony of the church in all its sectors has for nearly two millennia been gravely mistaken about doctrines of Christianity so central that St. Paul staked the very essence of the Faith on them (1 Cor. 15:17-19)*. It asks us to accept the proposition that when the saints throughout the world every Lord's day affirm publicly their faith that Christ will one day return to judge the living and the dead, they are grossly mistaken. It asks us to cast overboard the vital planks of the Nicene and Athanasian creeds which have defined core Christianity for many centuries. It asks us to assume that God is not sufficiently sovereign to protect his church for 2000 years from severe Christological and eschatological error, or that he has willed that his church should be mistaken on a subject at the very heart of her hope and faith.

In short, it asks us to repudiate cardinal tenets of the Christian Faith. We call such teachings heresy, even—perhaps especially—if they are espoused by pious, sincere people who assertedly desire nothing more than to “get back to what the Bible teaches.” This was precisely the claim of Arias, who denied Christ's ontological equality with God. Heresy parading under the guise of allegiance to Scripture is no less heretical

than modern liberalism that jettisons Scripture altogether—and is in many ways more pernicious.

HP's are aware of their serious deviation from historic Christianity, and offer arguments trying to justify this deviation. The Leonards, for instance, try to excuse their violation of Christian orthodoxy by the following illogic:

To equate membership in the Christian community with doctrinal orthodoxy, as do some interpreters, while insisting that belief in a future coming of Christ is part of that orthodoxy, results in a logical inconsistency which in effect renders the parousia impossible. At a future appearance of Christ, believers would have to abandon their orthodox eschatology in order to recognize that his coming is no longer future. But by abandoning this belief, they would cease to be the people to whom Christ comes. Either orthodoxy need not include a futuristic eschatology, or else it cannot be the test of who belongs to the people of God.¹¹

This is tantamount to arguing that no Old Testament saint could have been bound in the covenant community to hold the sacrifices to be temporarily though genuinely efficacious since the Redeemer in the first Advent would do way with them in his definitive death. In eternity, *to have affirmed* the **physical** second Advent prior to history's end will be essential. But the authors' assault on orthodoxy is more disingenuous than their argument first appears, since it is not merely the chronology but the *character* of the second Advent they attack. The orthodox do not hold merely to the second Advent as future to the present generation but to the *physical* second Advent, no less physical than the first Advent. We know it has not yet occurred because Christ's physical, bodily presence has not appeared as it did appear in his first Advent.

The Leonards, in addition, employ an interesting and pernicious—though by no means unprecedented—argument in undermining Christian eschatology:

Future-oriented [that is, orthodox, AS] eschatology—be it amillennial, premillennial, or postmillennial—demonstrates a fundamental problem in the interpretation of Scripture. The problem is that the true import [meaning] of the biblical word-pictures of the end of the age was obscured when the church made the transition from a Semitic to a Hellenistic cultural environment. The underlying theological agenda at work in Greco-Roman civilization was not the one operative in Palestinian Judaism during the period before the revolt against Rome.¹²

In other words, the church was influenced in its eschatological dogmas by Greek thinking and thereby lured away from its primitive Hebrew ideational moorings that use language in such manner as to forbid Christian orthodox interpretation. This is typical canard made famous by liberals like Harnack. “Pure” first-century Christianity was spoiled by Greek thought and philosophy that dominated doctrinal development and the formation of Christian orthodoxy in the first four centuries.¹³ On this assumption liberals discard the orthodox doctrine of Christ.¹⁴ It discounts or ignores God's

providence in the formation of Christian orthodoxy, including the shaping of language and thought forms as adequate vehicles for the communication of dogmatic truth at the heart of Christianity.¹⁵ Taken to its logical conclusion, it undermines the authority and infallibility of Scripture, which, no less than the creeds and confessions, manifests historically and philosophically shaped language and thought forms. Just as God shaped man and history in such a manner as to convey his *infallible* word in human language and thought forms, so he shaped man and history in such a manner as to convey *accurate* dogma in human language and thought forms.

To assert with the Leonards, therefore, that orthodox eschatology can be scrapped because it imposes alien Greek thought forms on Biblical Hebraic thought forms is worse than mistaken; it is destructive of the essence of Christian orthodoxy and opens the door to the subversion of the Bible itself, which, no less than orthodox dogma, bears an unmistakably historical character.

In contrast to the HP's, therefore, all orthodox Christians in all sectors of the church echo Tertullian (c. 155/60-240/50) in confessing that Christ

was crucified, rose again on the third day; and having ascended into heaven, sat at the right [hand] of the Father; ... sent the only Spirit with vicarious power to lead those who believe; is going to come in glory to take the saints into the enjoyment of eternal life and of the heavenly promises, and to condemn the godless to eternal fire, after the resurrection of both classes and their restoration in the flesh.... This rule, as will be proved, was taught by Christ, and admits of no questions among us, except those which heresies bring in and which make men heretics.¹⁶

This is *Christian* truth, not Hellenic truth.

Historic Christianity and A-Historical Apostasy

We live in a lamentably a- and anti-historical era. Ignorance of—and contempt for—history and tradition abounds. They are no less pervasive in the church than in the secular culture. Sometimes, they are even *more* pervasive there. Liberalism, by and large, looks on the past as bound by outmoded, supernaturalistic, superstitious, unscientific thought forms and notions which shaped Christian theology, which must now conform itself to the Enlightenment ideas of modernity. This means most of historic Christianity must be scrapped. Conservatives—especially evangelicals—look on the Christian past and the theology it generated as “too Catholic” or “too Protestant” and not sufficiently Biblical. To this way of thinking, historic Roman Catholics and Protestants overlaid their belief systems with mere human traditions, and what we need today is a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, from which we can reproduce a truly Biblical Faith that is neither Roman nor Protestant but Biblical. This dangerously naive notion does not recognize its own historically conditioned dogmas which are in no sense equivalent to Biblical teaching, nor how these beliefs inescapably create a tradition—no less traditionary than that over which they thunder against the Western church. The question is not whether there will be a tradition (2 *Thes.* 2:15); it is whether there will be a tradition that conforms systematically to Biblical revelation.

The Reformed church, not merely the Roman and Eastern, holds that certain core doctrines of Christianity constituting its very essence cannot be undermined by a facile appeal to the Bible. In the words of Princetonian Charles Hodge, “The revelation of God in his Word begins in a fountain, and flows in a continuous stream ever increasing in volume. We are governed by this tradition of truth running through the whole sacred volume.”¹⁷ There is a “traditionary teaching flowing through the Christian Church from the day of Pentecost to the present time.” This, according to Hodge, is “the common faith of the Church, which no man is at liberty to reject and which no man can reject and be a Christian.”¹⁸ By this description of “the common faith” Hodge refers to what we call Christian orthodoxy.

Sola Scripture means that the Bible in the context of Christian orthodoxy is the sole, ultimate touchstone for faith and practice. It no more means that the Bible can be used to overturn cardinal elements of Christianity than the affirmation of the humanity of Christ means we can overturn affirmation of his deity. The Bible does not come to us in a vacuum. It is conveyed to us (usually) in the milieu of historic Christianity.¹⁹ Rome errs in assuming itself the exclusive and institutional vehicle of this historical conveyance; but cultists err in assuming themselves capable of interpreting the Bible without recourse to the Faith (HP can be classed as the latter).

Both errors are deadly.

Conclusion

What do we call those who deny orthodox theology proper, like tritheists; orthodox Christology, like Arians; or orthodox soteriology, like Pelagians? We call them heretics. How do we treat them? We rebuke them, and if they refuse to repent, we avoid them (*Titus* 3:10, 11).

We dare not treat those who deny orthodox eschatology any differently.

¹ R. C. Leonard and J. C. Leonard, *The Promise of His Coming* (Chicago, 1996), 168, 176.

² *ibid.*, 177.

³ *ibid.*, 95.

⁴ Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (no loc., 1957), 261.

⁵ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1970 ed.).

⁶ Leonard and Leonard, *op. cit.*, 127f.

⁷ *ibid.*, 118.

⁸ *ibid.*, 161, 168, 182, emphasis in original.

⁹ *ibid.*, 171-172.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 159, 160.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 85, n. 15.

¹² *ibid.*, 118, 119; see also 82.

¹³ James Orr, *Progress of Dogma* (Old Tappan, NJ, n.d.), 12-14.

¹⁴ L. Harold DeWolf, *The Case for Theology in Liberal Perspective* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 72.

¹⁵ Andrew Sandlin, “Toward a Reformed View of Ecclesiastical Tradition,” *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* (forthcoming).

¹⁶ William A. Jurgens, ed. and trans., *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, MN, 1970), 1:120.

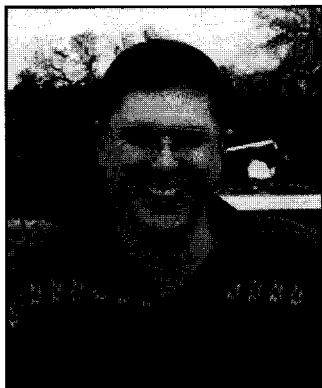
¹⁷ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1981), 1:113.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, 113, 114.

¹⁹ Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism* (Philadelphia and Boston [1845], 1964), 79.

Heresy in Galatia

By Mark Rushdoony



I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another: but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (Gal. 1:6-7)

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by

the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Gal. 2:16) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Gal. 2:21)

The Galatians were originally from the Rhine River area of Gaul. Originally called Gallo-Grecians, they had been a warlike people and had come to dominate a large part of Asia Minor. Over time prosperity brought weakness and they were conquered and absorbed into the Roman empire. Paul visited the Galatian cities of Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium on all three of his missionary journeys. This may account for Paul's disgust with their gullibility in accepting false doctrine, though Calvin thought this epistle was written much earlier than generally accepted, perhaps after the first trip. False teachers had come into the region of Galatia and taught that justification, or God's declaration of righteousness, came by obedience to the law rather than grace (2:16, 21). The bulk of the epistle deals with this issue of righteousness by an act of God versus man's self-achievement of righteousness.

Another issue had apparently raised its head, however, and Paul had to begin by addressing a direct challenge to his authority. It seems these false teachers realized they had to directly challenge Paul's authority and his right to claim apostolic authority if they were to successfully challenge his teachings. They may have falsely claimed the blessing of the original apostles and denigrated Paul as being just another preacher. Paul therefore responded in the first two chapters of Galatians with a very clear and strong defense of his authority and commission from God independently of the other apostles. Paul said he was an apostle not from men or because of men but by the power of Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Christ from the dead (1:1). If the false teachers claimed any greater authority, they would have to contend with the resurrecting power of God. Paul expressed amazement that the Galatians were so quickly convinced to abandon his teachings (1:4) and pronounced a curse on anyone who perverted the gospel (1:8). This harsh tone was necessary, Paul declared,

because it was not his own teaching they were abandoning, but the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:11-12). He had not planned to be an apostle (1:13-14) but had been called by God's grace from his mother's womb (1:15) to serve God.

In order to show that his authority was not derived from even that of the apostles, Paul spends a great deal of time (1:16-2:10) recounting that his call was not from the apostles or dependent on them but that they in fact recognized his calling from God and rejoiced in it. He even mentioned the fact that he had publicly rebuked Peter for snubbing the Gentile believers to avoid the criticism of the Pharisaical element in the church. Thus, even the other apostles were willing to stand corrected by Paul. The implication is that the Galatians and their false teachers must do likewise.

Regarding the crucial matter of the heresy itself, Paul also got right to the point. His salutation referred to Jesus Christ "who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world. . . ." (1:4). Now, if Christ gave himself for our sins "according to the will of God and our Father," how could the false teachers claim the need of any additional source of righteousness? They had left the gospel of Christ's atonement for another corrupted one (1:6). Paul does not even want to use the term "another gospel" which might imply it was a legitimate alternative, so he adds it is "not another," only a product of perversion of the true gospel (1:7). To abandon the gospel of Jesus Christ is a terrible thing, but to abandon its free grace in favor of justification by works is worse.

The Judaizers were more properly those who sought to bring Phariseeism into the church, or more precisely they sought to reabsorb Christianity back into a Pharisaical form of Judaism.

The false teachers the Galatians faced were not restricted to Asia Minor; they were apparently a fixture in the early church. They have been called Judaizers but have been inaccurately characterized by antinomians as anyone who kept Biblical ceremonies or law. If this were true, then Paul was a Judaizer, for he performed the Nazarite vow, worshipped in the temple (long after the veil had been torn and the Holy Spirit had been given), and even showed respect for the high priest who abused him at his arrest. The Judaizers were more properly those who sought to bring Phariseeism into the church, or more precisely they sought to reabsorb Christianity back into a Pharisaical form of Judaism. Paul would later say just this (6:12-13) when he said the motive of the Judaizers was to avoid persecution

A Reconstructed View of Wild Animals, Or, I Love Bambi, Medium Rare

By Rev. Brian M. Abshire



My History With Wild Animals

Some of my strongest childhood memories of growing up in rural Maine come from the hunting stories the old timers used to tell during the winter. Fishermen spend the long, cold winter nights in tiny workshops, building and repairing their traps and buoys.

Heated by pot belly stoves, glowing cherry red from burning the soft wood scraps from the traps, I felt the air was suffocating with the acrid smoke of cheap pipe tobacco. To this day, a whiff of Cherry Blend or Half and Half takes me immediately back to those tiny workshops watching various uncles and their friends do their winter chores, and occasionally taking furtive sips of some nasty smelling amber liquid, while telling “whoppers.”

The “whopper” is a much maligned and misunderstood, ancient and honorable Maine art form. It consists of telling the most unbelievable stories with a completely straight face. The real fun was telling whoppers to “Summer Complaints” from Boston or New York to see just how far you could pull their leg before it came off in your hands. The “whopper’s” (pronounced “whoppah’s”) only serious rival for home-grown fun was giving directions to lost tourists. If you did it right you could get “summer complaints” so lost that when they thought they were headed for Bah Hahbah (I mean Bar Harbor) they’d end up in Southern Canada. Of course, the real goal was to so misdirect the poor tourist that he found himself right back in New York or Boston!

Now where was I? Oh, yes, that’s right; we were talking about “whoppers,” weren’t we? While any topic was fair game for a whopper, hunting was by far the favorite. Now, hunting in Maine in the old days was serious business. Most of these men had grown up during the Depression and the ability to bag a deer could be the difference between feeding one’s family or seeing them go hungry. And if sometimes, the deer hanging in the shed appeared slightly earlier or later than the opening and closing days of hunting season, nobody minded (except the game wardens, and since they had steady jobs with the state, nobody much cared what they thought!). And if there was slightly more venison in the freezer than could be justified by the number of hunting tags purchased, well, those things

because of the doctrine of the atonement (“lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ”). If they could redefine Christianity as a branch of Judaism they could avoid persecution from the religious *status quo* and from Rome (Christianity was not a legal religion). Paul even said that those who insisted on circumcision did not keep the law. When Paul met the apostles at Jerusalem he said Titus was not “compelled to be circumcised” (2:3) because it was desired by “false brethren” who came into the church “to spy out our liberty” (2:4). Timothy was circumcised; Paul could have made Titus comply as well. Clearly, circumcision was not condemned in any way; Paul merely refused to allow it to be made obligatory. These false brethren wanted to “lay down the law” and mandate circumcision as a church rule, but Paul refused to accommodate them. He did not give way to them “no, not for an hour” (2:5).

Another instance of Judaizers trying to bring Phariseism into the church was the incident Paul recounted regarding his rebuke of Peter. We have mentioned that Peter recognized Paul’s authority; but just as important, the false, Pharisaical practice of Peter was apostolically denounced. Peter had withdrawn (2:12) from fellowship with the Gentile believers and submitted to an indefensible Pharisaical rule (not eating with Gentiles). Peter’s sin was serious because he had brought Gentile Christians under a Pharisaical rule (not part of God’s law) while he, though a Jew, felt Christ had given him liberty (2:14). As Paul’s selective use of circumcision and his personal actions make clear, the use of Biblical (and by implication, extra-Biblical) ceremonies for personal edification or piety before God was allowable as long as they were not imposed on the conscience of others as mandatory. But beyond that, the use of any ceremony or work as a means of acquiring righteous standing before God was not only improper but constituted “another gospel.”

When Paul said “a man is not justified by the works of the law” we must not restrict this to ceremonies, for it includes all the law, including what some designate the “moral law.” Many people who think they are holier than God do not even regard the ceremonies under discussion here. Nevertheless, they believe they can be righteous before God by their ethical or moral conduct. Ceremonies, we must realize, are not at the heart of religions of works. It is a belief in the goodness and innate ability of man to present himself deserving before God that constitutes this heresy of self-righteousness. Ceremonies may or may not be regarded, for such men may argue individual practices and issues. It is not a claim to technical adherence that is the basis of their false faith but a claim to moral righteousness before God. Opposed to this is the belief in God’s gracious declaration of justification to undeserving sinners because of Christ’s atonement for our sins. We thus realize we are “dead to the law” that we might “live unto God” (2:19). We are dead to the law not because the law is dead but because our death penalty has been satisfied in Jesus Christ. We are now restored to fellowship with God so that our regenerate hearts can live for Him. Because our death penalty is paid, we no longer dread God’s judgment but cry out to Him, “Abba, Father.”

happen. And if occasionally, that fine buck with the magnificent antlers standing amidst the trees, turned out to be Bambi's mother instead, well, venison is venison. If this doesn't sound very "sportsmanlike," it's because in the old days it wasn't a sport; it was survival, pure and simple.

Though women were not unknown to hunt, it was mainly a man's job to bring home the venison. Young boys eagerly awaited the day when they could accompany their fathers with a single-shot .410 shotgun and help fill the family's larder. It was many a boy's rite of passage from childhood to beginning to fulfill his responsibilities as a man by helping provide for his family.

These same people think meat comes neatly packaged in plastic from the food store, and don't consider that their Big Mac originally came from an "innocent" cow, minding its own business until it was given a lifetime membership at the local abattoir!

My Dad used to tell a "story" from the Great Depression when Grand Dad handed him a rickety single-shot .22 held together with bailing wire and chewing gum and one bullet. He was told to go hunting and bring something home; otherwise the family had nothing to eat. Dad, being an obedient son, trudged dutifully into a hardwood stand across from a small brook. As he was crossing the brook, he saw a rabbit, eating by the side of a rock. But there on the other side was a bobcat, stalking the rabbit. Bobcats had a bounty on them in those days, and the skin could bring a whole five dollars, a small fortune. Which to shoot, the bobcat for the bounty, or the rabbit for supper? Well, Pop took a bead on the Bobcat, aimed carefully and fired. That poor old rusty piece of junk .22 exploded in seventeen different directions. Pop fell backwards into the water, thankfully unhurt, but heard the bullet ricochet off the rock. As Dad picked himself out of the water, disgusted with himself, and perhaps a little fearful of Grand Dad's response at missing both bobcat and rabbit, a bird suddenly fell out of the sky right beside him! It seemed that a piece of the gun had gone straight up and hit a goose flying overhead! As he bent over to pick up the goose, he felt something squirming in his britches and there were two fine-looking trough sticking out of his pockets! And when he looked over at the other side of the bank, both the rabbit, and the bobcat were stone dead. It seems the bullet in hitting the rock, had split in two, one

piece killing the rabbit and the other killing the bobcat. When he got home, Grand Dad's only comment was, "You busted my gun!"

Young boys in rural Maine were reared on such stories, imbibed them like modern teenagers hang on every lyric of a popular rock song, and eagerly looked forward to the day when they could make up their own. Sadly, two events prevented me from ever realizing my own rite of passage as a ten year old. First we moved to the big city (a bustling metropolis of almost two thousand people!) and hunting was no longer convenient. Secondly, my family disintegrated just about this time, and Dad never had the chance to pass on those skills.

So, instead, I spent my teenage years growing long hair, wearing bell-bottom jeans and generally making a nuisance of myself. Military service, mostly overseas, marriage and college followed soon after, and I was in my late 20's before hunting again entered my life. I was the assistant pastor, minister of youth, director of Christian Education (and don't forget to take out the rubbish, Brian!) at a small church in Minnesota while in seminary. Trying to connect with some of the kids in my youth group, I found that all of them came from hunting families and loved spending time in the woods. So finally, after years of delay, I found myself back in line with old traditions.

I soon discovered two things; first, I loved hunting more than any other pasttime I had ever tried. There is something magnificent about a crisp October morning, with the trees all golden, the woods quiet except for the crunch of your feet on half-frozen leaves, your dog suddenly going "birdy" just before that thunderous explosion as a ruffled grouse breaks from right beneath your feet. The second thing I discovered was that I wasn't very good at it! On the trap and skeet range, I could bust clay pigeons with reasonable frequency (not much eating, though, on clay pigeons; kind of muddy tasting). I liked to hide in the thickest, nastiest scrub, and inevitably the barrel of my .12 gauge would hang up on a branch and the bird would go one way, while some innocent tree would get blasted at close range. Deer hunting was even worse. I've hunted with a bow, shotgun, rifle, and except for getting cold, wet, and miserable, Bambi has always managed to get away safely (but just wait till next year; I've got this shoulder-fired, heat-seeking missile!). The best part of deer hunting in the Great White North is the enormous hunter's breakfast you have to eat to keep warm. Well, at least I'm good at something!

Today's Christians and Wild Animals

Imagine my surprise when I talk with people about hunting, and to my horror discover that thanks to Disney, most people, including Christians, now think it a barbaric blood sport and that killing a deer makes you the moral equivalent of Charles Manson! Since there has been massive urbanization in the past fifty years, most Americans now come from cities, do not have hunting traditions, think all wild animals are cute and cuddly, and cannot bear the thought of killing an "innocent" animal. It always amazed me that these same people think meat comes neatly packaged in plastic from the food store, and don't consider that their Big Mac originally came from an "innocent" cow, minding its own business until it was given a lifetime

membership at the local abattoir! I also never understood what these people think deer do, when they are not hunted. Unchecked, deer herds multiply, destroy the environment and then die horribly of starvation. Hunting thins the population, maintains the balance and provides a cheap, healthy source of protein to needy families (our deacons routinely buy extra deer tags just to give the meat away).

Thanks to schmaltzie movies and TV shows, even Christians have a skewed perspective on wild animals. Most don't come into contact with anything except fuzzy little squirrels (my Dad called them "tree rats") capering through their front lawns. "But they look so cute." These are the same dunderheads who go to national parks, smear their children's faces with jam so they can get a picture of their child being licked by a bear (isn't it a miracle what a good plastic surgeon can do these days?). They then offer themselves as "take-out" food to Grizzly bears by sleeping outdoors in areas overrun with animals bored with the local food supply. Over a twenty-year period, more than 36 people were mauled or killed by bears at our national parks. If that doesn't sound too unreasonable in light of the two hundred million people who visited the parks during that same time, just remember, not all parks have bears. Some people do not seem to realize just how dangerous wild animals are, and do not take the precautions necessary to prevent becoming part of the food chain.

Wild Animals and Sin

Sound harsh and unfeeling? Yes, I admit it. But most people do not think through the implications of living in a world cursed by sin. Wild animals, by their nature, are dangerous to man, and are a curse in Scripture. In fact, one of the reasons why God did not supernaturally destroy the Caananites was so that the land would not be overrun with wild animals (*cf. Ex. 23:28*). In a time when God's covenant blessings flow, then the effects of that curse are rolled back. Animals are "cute" and "cuddly" when the grace of God flows to an obedient people. We look forward to the time when the "lion will lay down with the lamb" (*Is. 11:5ff*). But folks, that time is not here yet; and that cursed world outside your door is in fact a dangerous place.

In Wisconsin, where I presently make my home, Bambi and his friends do millions of dollars of damage each year as they destroy crops, shrubbery and expensive ornamental plants. They also kill people. Yup, little old Bambi kills people every year on Wisconsin roads by crashing into cars. In Calaveras County, where Chalcedon is located, there are more accidents between deer and people, than between people and people. Recently while visiting Chalcedon, Rush and I were coming home from dinner, when he warned me to keep my speed below 45 because deer have a habit of running across the road ("but Rush, I'm under grace, not law!"). Literally, within a minute, we passed a dead deer lying sprawled in the other lane, just hit by a car!

Furthermore, a terrible pestilence, unknown since colonial times, has reappeared even in modern suburbs. Lyme's disease comes from a tick carried by deer. When deer were aggressively hunted, and their population kept in check, the ticks disappeared. Now that fewer people hunt, deer populations are

rising, the ticks are also multiplying, and they may be in the shrubbery of your suburban home. If you live in the West, you don't have to worry, though; the growing mountain lion population ought to keep the deer in check. And if more mountain lions means the occasional dog, cat, and child goes missing, heck, that's the price of being environmentally correct. (Rush tells a great story about one of his daughters narrowly avoiding a deer running across the road, only to be hit by the mountain lion chasing it!)

People in the outskirts of Los Angeles are starting to see strange dogs rooting through their garbage. It seems that coyotes have also found suburbia a nice place to live. And again, pets, children, and the occasional woman jogger have fallen victim to the coyote's taste for city cuisine. The last decade has seen our federal government spending your tax money to actually bring back mountain lions, wolves, deadly snakes, etc., into areas once containing small, subsistence family farms. Rushdoony offers the insight that the federal government has a vested interest in making rural communities unsafe for people, forcing them to live in cities where they can be controlled.

Wolves are a particularly touchy subject to address, since the emotion around them tends to run high. While there is not a *documented* case of wolves attacking men in North America, (but not many native Americans were known for keeping statistics), just ask any rancher about the enormous economic damage they do to their herds. For example, the legendary "Custer" wolf managed in ten years of devastation in South Dakota and Wyoming, to eat more than \$25,000 worth of stock before finally being killed in 1920. And that's when money was backed with gold, and was worth something.

In Europe, though, wolves were documented man killers, one eating more than 40 Parisians in 1472, and another almost 50 people in 1766. Ancient history? In 1946, a pack ate two soldiers on the Rumanian and Polish borders before being driven off with hand grenades and automatic weapons fire. Finland had serious problems in 1949 and wolves ate 11 children in Portugal in 1945. Russia has had constant problems with wolves right up to this day (see Peter Capstick's *Man-Eaters* for all the gruesome details). Now consider this: there are no biological differences between European and American wolves. Why eat people in one country and not another? Maybe as a Christian nation we once had grace that God may soon remove?

Men and Wild Animals

I know, I know, some wag is going to say, "Men are a lot more dangerous to animals, than the poor animals will ever be to men." And of course, he's right, if you put people on the same level as animals and if it is not your child savaged by a wolf, coyote or cougar. Personally, I happen to think that animals were put here for US to exercise dominion over, not for THEM to enjoy a change of diet. But if one wants a look at the future, just think about what a nation is like under the curse of God. Look at self-consciously pagan nations such as Africa or India. The leopard has been on the endangered species list for some time now, and it is illegal to bring a leopard skin into the USA. Yet, conservative estimates say that there is about

one leopard per square mile in Africa. Evolutionists will be happy to know that to leopards we look like just another ape, their normal prey. No one knows how many women and children are eaten EVERY DAY by leopards because rural villages often don't figure very high on national government priorities. Jack Denton Scott in his book, *Speaking Wildly*, mentions ONE leopard eating 100 people in India in 1958. Think about this: 10 people a day, die in Africa from crocodiles alone as women go to the rivers for water (think of this the next time you want to visit Florida with all those lovely alligators!).

And lions, don't get me started. A recent film in 1996 featured the wily adventures of the Man-eaters of Tsavo, a couple of fun-loving kitties who managed to eat 300 coolies and natives working on the trans-Ugandan railroad at the end of the last century. The film was so "animally correct" that the producers made the lions into some sort of demonic spirit. Because, of course, the Lion King is really a compassionate, funny, role model with a great singing voice and the ability to subsist on bugs when it might otherwise offend his other animal friends. Yeah, right.

Most people of my generation saw the film, or read the book "Born Free." What neither the movie nor the book bothered to tell us was that at least two of "Elsa's" siblings became man-eaters. Most people think lions, tigers and leopards become man-eaters only when they are too old, or sick, or wounded to feed off their "natural game." Professional game wardens will tell you differently. Of all the man-eaters shot by game wardens, less than 10% fall into this category. Any predator, in close proximity to man, can develop a taste for human protein. But hey, we see all those TV specials showing affectionate lions and tigers, actually living with people. But do you really want to develop your theology of wild animals from Sigfried and Roy?

I have only seen lions, at biting distance, once. I was in Africa at the time, and besides trying to eat the car I was sitting in, caused me no great problems (after all, it wasn't my car!). It was only afterwards that the game warden told me that the exact, same pride had eaten a university student the week before. The educated idiot had gotten out of his car to better look for lions dozing during the midday sun. He spotted them, and they spotted him. The rest is, as they say, culinary history.

In the interest of fair play, my good friend, Peter Hammond, has a different perspective. He and his people often move through dangerous territory, and apart from carefully brushing and flossing their teeth (as hyenas are attracted by the smell of rotting food in the mouth and have a habit of eating people's faces off) take no special precautions. In fact, Peter loves animals. Though in his military days he helped more than a few communists make that last trip to the Great Socialist Republic in the Sky, he is aghast at the idea of hunting animals.

A true story that Peter often tells on himself concerns his honeymoon. He took his beautiful bride Lenora to a game park. Lenora, being a sensible American girl, was afraid of lions and asked Peter what he would do if one attacked. He replied he

would probably raise his hands and shout and that would most likely drive the lion away. But Lenora, knowing his love for animals, insisted, what would he do if the lion continued coming? Would Peter shoot it? Peter replied, that he would probably shoot between the lion's legs and the sound would almost certainly scare away the lion. "But Peter," Lenora insisted, "if the lion continued coming, you WOULD shoot it, wouldn't YOU?" Since Peter and Lenora are still happily married, I can only guess that he managed to calm her fears, but at the time, Lenora was not sure which would win out, his love for animals, or his love for her. But Peter really is in a special situation and I do not doubt that angels camp around him and his missionaries. Others are not so blessed.

Theology and Wild Animals

Now lest some cynic think the only reason I am writing about wild animals is so I can write off this year's hunting costs on my income tax (but don't be surprised if November's column is entitled, "A Reconstructed View of Hunting Rifles"), there is a serious and theological side. As a nation sinks further into depravity and apostasy, as it becomes ever more consistent with its rebellion against God, one can only expect that more than men will get wilder, and the covenant curses of Deuteronomy will become increasingly evident. God put the fear of man into wild animals (Gen 9:2) but now, right across the earth, animals have lost that fear. Expect attacks against people and property to increase. Watch in hypnotic horror the occasional TV special about wild animal attacks and reassure yourself that statistically, you're really very safe, unless you happen to live in a rural area, or visit a national park, or go jogging in the early morning in the suburbs.

Dominion requires an accurate assessment of the world around us, the world as it really is, not the way that Hollywood imagines it to be. Part of that dominion requires caring for the environment, of course. We are stewards under God, it all belongs to Him, and must be used according to his law. But he has given us the flesh of animals for food (Gen. 9:3), and we have a responsibility to tend the earth, subdue it and cultivate it. And if that means some wild animals have to be restricted to zoos, game parks and wilderness preserves, then so be it. And if it requires some of us to faithfully buy our hunting licenses each year, so we can provide the needed funds for habitat maintenance, please don't get upset if we enjoy harvesting deer, pheasants, grouse, ducks and geese. Would you rather have a hunter keeping the "natural" populations in balance, or deal with a wolf, bear or mountain lion in your back yard?

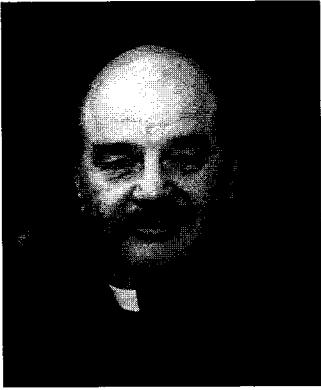
When God grants us grace, and the Greater Reformation begins, and the blessings of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ flow to all of creation, then all animals will be tamed, and Disney's fantasies will become reality.

But until then, wild animals will remain wild.

And dangerous.

Methods Are Primary

By Ellsworth McIntyre



I have been pondering about a title for a column in the *Chalcedon Report*. I have emerged from my creative meditation with this, "Methods are Primary." This is not an original idea, but an application of the techniques written, taught and demonstrated by the Teacher who has nothing left to learn, the Lord Jesus Christ. That phrase, "nothing left to learn,"

was taught to me by Dr. Joseph Henson, of Bob Jones University. Such "gems" should be attributed to their author.

*For emotion must be upon
emotion, feeling upon feeling,
smile and tear; smile and tear,
emote a little, emote a lot, but
never use the covenant.*

The Lord's methods are found in Isaiah 28:10, "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." If I could write an illustration of modern, ungodly methods, it would be, "For emotion must be upon emotion, feeling upon feeling, smile and tear; smile and tear, emote a little, emote a lot, but never use the covenant." The secret of effective teaching is found in polishing the method, instead of the curriculum or printed teaching aides. Conservative teachers and Christian home schoolers often make this error. They frantically search for the perfect books, lessons, etc., to produce their perfectly educated school product. In the meantime, while burying themselves under a pile of expensive books, videos, and such "goodies," they practice permissive, unconditional "love," after the storm of "emotion" has subsided at the end of another frustrating school day. The home school mother wonders on her bed in the quiet of the night, "If these course materials are so great, why do I get the feeling my child is behind?"

Well, I am sorry to report that Mother's fear is justified by my experience. I have tested hundreds of Christian and home school students as they sought admission to my schools. Almost none measured up to the grade level of students under my

supervision. (I could say, none whatsoever, if we measured on an overall comparison.) I say "Almost none," because students with a particular flair for math or language did compare well, but this was a triumph of talent over teachers' and Mother's home school lessons. Please do not write wearying letters to me talking about "national averages." Of course, the Christian schoolers and home schoolers compare well to the national norms. Who doesn't? I am talking about their performance versus averages of students in a good, private school, not versus impoverished national norms. Let's face it, all Christian and home schoolers are better off not in the public schools, but is that good enough for you? So, if you wish to do better, don't run out to buy another printed set of books, tests, videos, films and such "Get-smart-quick schemes." The Biblical answer is found in methods. The methods are primary, not the lesson, however it is packaged and promoted.

This column will attempt to point out the obvious, because it falls on me to do this. Why? Well, there is no prestige to be won talking about methods, but oh, my, there is some money and loads of prestige in the ". . . of making many books, there is no end; and much study is the weariness of the flesh" (*Ec. 12:12*). I am afraid, dear Home School Mother and Idealistic Young Christian Teacher, some authors who never could, never would, never even tried to control a class, are out to write the newest "shrine of learning gimmick," because there is money to be found in "making many books."

*If you wish to do better, don't
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My mission is running and starting day care/schools; so as a ministry to our readers, I will talk of what I know from experience, instead of what I hope will make money. My goal is to give the Reconstructive teacher the benefit of demonstrated achievement at Grace Community Schools. My columns will sometimes shock you; for example, "Did you know God recommends 'rote learning'?" Isn't that hilarious? Some of my education professors would faint dead away at such primitive notions. Please read my monthly column and send for a copy of my book, *How to Become a Millionaire in Christian Education*, now available. Just send a check for \$10.00 plus \$2.00 postage and handling, made payable to Nicene Press, 4405 Outer Dr., Naples, Florida 34112.

Urban Nations Update: Knock-Knock!

By Steve M. Schlissel

Who's there? You never know. When I walk out my front door in New York City I'm as likely to meet a person from around the world as from around the corner.

Once I went outside and found an Islamic family, recently arrived from Egypt, in front of my house. They were looking for an address, but they were in the wrong neighborhood (they did not know that *East 24th Street* was miles away from *West 24th Street*). Wrong neighborhood, that is, on their agenda, not the Lord's. We ended up teaching English to the wife and finding a job for the husband.

Another time I found a Russian immigrant, Nadia, looking somewhat confused. Long story short: Nadia ended up living with us for a year or so, and heard about the Lord Jesus day and night.

*Every day in New York City
is an adventure in world
missions. And there is no sign
that this will let up soon; in
fact, the opportunities are
growing.*

Once when I answered the phone, a Sri Lankan man asked for help. He, too, ended up living with us. We helped him bring his wife and child over from a war-torn area of Sri Lanka and assisted him with his career. He is now a successful businessman and he and his wife have three children (the latter two with Biblical names). In fact, this is the man who gave the Egyptian man employment!

Every day in New York City is an adventure in world missions. And there is no sign that this will let up soon; in fact, the opportunities are growing. A report in *The New York Times* earlier this year confirms what our eyes have already seen: immigrants are becoming the dominant group in New York's demographics. 563,000 legal immigrants poured into the city from 1990 through 1994, joining the more than 2 million legal and 400,000 illegal immigrants who were already here. (I judge these numbers to be conservative.) During the same period ('90-'94), about 500,000 native New Yorkers left the city.

Not only are immigrants replacing American-born residents; they are out-reproducing them. "In 1990, 29 percent of the women in the city were foreign-born, but they had 43 percent

of the children." Foreign-born residents and the children born to them here make up 53 percent of New York's official, legal population.

The trend is toward a *greater* representation of the world in this single city. One of the most dramatic increases is among those from former Soviet Republics. "Average annual immigration from the Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and other nations rose tenfold from the 1980's to the 1990's."

The top countries of origin for immigrants to New York City are:

Dominican Republic
Former Soviet Union
China (includes Taiwan and Hong Kong)
Jamaica
Guyana
Poland
Philippines
Trinidad
Tobago
Haiti
India
Ecuador
Ireland
Colombia
Bangladesh
Korea

These 15 sources contribute nearly 80 percent of the number of souls arriving annually. Add the other countries of origin and we have more than 112,000 legal immigrants moving to New York City each year, all of whom need to hear about the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ.

When we at Urban Nations say, "The world is here now," we're not just talking through our hat. Our motto is well chosen: *Reaching the World Where the World's Within Reach*. But we need more than a motto to do the work.

"Knock-knock!"

"Who's there?"

"Opportunity."

"Opportunity who?"

"Opportunity to fulfill the Great Commission in a single generation."

"You're kidding."

"No, we're not. Everything is in place—except the funds."

"What are you going to do?"

"Knock-knock!" (*Mt. 7:7,8*)

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Christian Reconstruction on the Island of Puerto Rico

By Bruce W. Roessler



Roessler Family: Bruce, Eva; Children: Nicolás and Sofia

It was towards the end of the 80s and early 90s that my theological, and even Christian, life was changed forever. The Lord very graciously allowed me to see and comprehend more deeply the awesome richness of His theology, via *theonomy* and *postmillennialism*. My wife and I are pretty much Methodist in our Biblical background, but have embraced theonomy, postmillennialism, and the covenant in its entirety, except some key points that touch the area of soteriology. We firmly believe in child baptism.

Three books changed my view of life and the world: *The Puritan Hope*, *Backward Christian Soldiers*, and *Institutes of Biblical Law*. What I discovered through *Biblical Law* (Dr. Rushdoony's) so filled me with joy, anticipation and awesomeness, that I've almost become obsessed with God's righteous law, love and kindness. For this, I've not been able to thank Dr. Rushdoony enough.

Since those years, I've discovered here in Puerto Rico, my home country, a certain number of Christian laymen and ministers who also were researching Reconstructionism, or had embraced it fully. Others I was blessed with the privileged of introducing to Christian Reconstruction:

1. The Rev. Ralph Monge, a Presbyterian pastor and Christian academy director.
2. The Rev. Rafael Aponte, Presbyterian-ordained minister and Bible scholar.

3. The Rev. Johnny Ortiz, Presbyterian pastor and missions director for 5 churches and 4 schools on the Island of Haiti.
4. Esq. Edric Vivoni Farage, lawyer and General Director of the Christian Coalition in P.R.A Baptist.
5. Mr. Edgar Trinidad, lay Christian with evangelistic aspirations. Political consultant. Restaurant manager. Baptist.
6. Rev. Enrique Ramos, Presbyterian minister, graduate of Westminster Theological Seminary, PA.

I myself am pastor of Bethany Missionary Church—ordained, Bible scholar, writer, conference speaker to Hispanic churches, apologist, and evangelist. (An uncle of mine is Pastor-founder of the largest independent Presbyterian church on the island). Slowly, but surely, the Lord is building His Kingdom here in Puerto Rico, and shaping and forming a theonomic-postmil world view in the minds and hearts of these Christian folk.

But of all these men, the ones with the most far-reaching scope thus far, I believe, are the Rev. Ralph Monge and Rev. Johnny Ortiz, for their work with Christian schools. These men are fully dedicated to the preaching of the Word of God and to the vision of communicating covenant truth to the children.

The work of Pastor Monge is situated on the southwestern end of the island, and Pastor Ortiz's on the north side. At present the church-academy ministry of Pastor Monge owns a beautiful piece of property, about some 3 acres of land, where plans are being laid out for the new school buildings, Lord providing. Pray for funds for the Monge's Christian Reconstructionist academy.

The Island of Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the U.S., with a democratic form of government. Population — 3 million. The culture is very religious, two-thirds Roman Catholic, one third Protestant. Of the two-thirds Catholic, a good chunk of it is nominal or traditional, as it is in Latin America. Another part is spiritist or demon worship. Due to Puerto Rico's deep-seated humanism, the culture is radically lawless and socialistic, or what some call a "mixed economy." At present P.R. has a murder rate of close to 1,000 per year, on an island 100 miles by 35. Theft is a daily routine. The island's divorce rate is one of the highest in the world. Right now it is a bridge for drug traffic between Latin America and the U.S.

Do pray for the church here. It is a good church, very large and numerous, but very deceived by dualism, humanism, and pietism. Nonetheless, it is highly evangelistic. If it can get a hold on theonomy and postmillennialism, it could do mighty things for God.

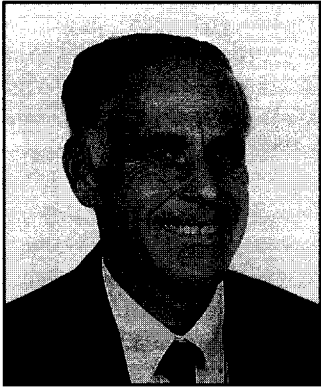
Those of us who have embraced theonomy here in P.R. are in eternal gratefulness to Dr. Rushdoony and the ministry of Chalcedon. Please come and see us. There is plenty of room in "the inn."

Our prayers for all of you. Our deepest thanks. We beg you to pray for us. Our sincere love to all.

Never dismay.

The Allurement of Hymenæus Preterism: The Rise of “Dispensable Eschatology”

By Jim West



A fellow pastor of a Reformed congregation informs me that a recent visitor to his congregation was encouraged to sign the guest book. When the service was over and the congregation disbanded, he peered at the guest book and noted the signature of the visitor, followed by a most unusual appendage: his name followed by the word “preterist.” The visitor could

have saved the minister a lot of time from searching the dictionary for the meaning of the word had he signed his name “Hymenæus” instead of “preterist.”

What is a “preterist?” And who was Hymenæus? The word “preterist” is a grammatical term describing what is “past.” Thus, if our interpretation of the Book of Revelation is that most, if not all, the book is fulfilled, we would be “preterists.” Or, if our interpretation of the first 34 verses of Matthew 24 saw their fulfillment in the A. D. 70 coming of Christ, we would subscribe to the preterist interpretation. However, in recent years a new expression of preterism has emerged that assigns the Second Coming or Parousia of Christ, the general Resurrection, and the Great White Throne Judgment to the past. In other words, *there are no future prophetic events*. According to this scenario, time will continue on this terrestrial ball forever. Both sin and the earth are everlasting. At death the soul of the believer passes into the presence of God and the soul of the unbeliever (presumably) to judgment—both to be disembodied spirits forever. The advocates of these ideas call themselves “consistent preterists” over against the “inconsistent preterists,” who, it is claimed, fail to face the implications of their position. The so-called “consistent preterist” holds that the Second Coming of Christ occurred in A. D. 70, and that the resurrection occurred when Israel was spiritually quickened. Some “consistent preterists” will even claim to be Calvinistic in their soteriology. Consequently, Christians who truly love the doctrines of grace may be taken unawares. There will be the temptation to treat by-gones as by-gones, to minimize the colossal differences. This amalgamation-temptation threatens to compromise the historic creeds of the church, especially such vital Christian teachings as the resurrection.

The Centrality of the Resurrection

The cardinal doctrine of the New Testament is the resurrection. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that if Christ be

not raised up, our faith is vain, our preaching is vain, and we are of all men most miserable. Paul’s thrust is that a dead Christ cannot save and that the church cannot have communion with a Christ who is still in the throes of death. Christ was raised from the dead in order to justify us (*Rom. 4:25*). Most significantly, it was by Christ’s resurrection that He “was declared to be the Son of God with power. . .” (*Rom. 1:4*). The resurrection is not only a blazing advertisement for the verity of Christianity, but the supreme attestation to the Deity of Christ Himself. If there is no resurrection, there is no Christianity. Scripture even teaches that salvation itself is a resurrection (*Jn. 5:24*). The purpose of Christ’s resurrection was to justify the whole man—body and soul. Even the new birth is actually a metaphor for the resurrection instead of the resurrection a metaphor for the new birth. Our labor is based on the bodily resurrection of Christ too. We are animated to work because of the resurrection (*1 Cor. 15:58*). Our work ethic is not only the (proverbial) “Protestant Work Ethic,” but “the Resurrection Work Ethic.” This is why we abound in the work of the Lord. Our very redemption is portrayed as the redemption of our bodies (*Rom. 8:23*).

What about Hymenæus?

The “consistent preterists” (as they charitably define themselves) deal with the resurrection in a manner that parallels two apostolic personalities. We refer to Hymenæus and Philetus, whom Paul names in 2 Timothy 2:17. These men were apparently church members (they “named the name of Christ”—verse 17). They were resurrection preterists and probably preterists in regard to the Second Coming of Christ, too. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 2:18 about their belief that “the resurrection is already past.” How could they have been afforded some prestige in the church?

For starters, they no doubt arrived at this conclusion sometime after their profession of faith in Christ. Thus, they were members in good standing in the church. In addition, they may have been leaders in the church, perhaps even elders or pastors. What is more, they did affirm and confess the resurrection! The resurrection was an important article of their faith that perhaps they would even have died for. They would confess their whole-hearted agreement with the “Blessed Hope” of the Second Coming and the promise of the resurrection. Upon being questioned about their views, they would argue that their faith is the same faith as the church as a whole, except for their exotic belief that the resurrection is “already past.”

What did they mean when they taught that the “resurrection is already past”? First, their error was not that the resurrection of Christ was “past.” Recognition that the resurrection of Christ was an historical event is not heresy. Had Hymenæus denied the past resurrection of Christ he would have been guilty of an obvious deviation from Biblical truth. One reason is every sermon in the Book of Acts exalts the resurrection of the flesh of Christ. The Apostle Peter provided a homiletic precedent for all future sermons by citing the second Psalm and its teaching about the resurrection of Christ’s “flesh” (*Ac. 2:31*). So this could not have been his error.

If Hymenæus meant that the bodily resurrection of the believer is “already past,” he would have been speaking nonsense, for he himself would have been bodily resurrected.

It is possible that he might have referred to the individuals who were resurrected on the very day that Jesus was crucified (*Mt. 27: 51-53*). However, since 1 Corinthians 15 and other resurrection-Scriptures were written long after that, the probability of this is zero.

The interpretation with the most distinct ring of truth is that he embraced the idea that the Christian's spiritual resurrection is past or that Israel's spiritual resurrection is past. Therefore he argued that there was no future, bodily resurrection for believers (or even unbelievers).

Reasons for Hymenæan Preterism

Why did Hymenæus and Philetus argue that the resurrection was past? The first reason is that they no doubt had a low view of the body—perhaps thinking of the body as a kind of shell for the more important spirit. This is the old error of Platonism that taught that the “body is the prison of the soul.” If the body is the prison of the soul, that does not forebode good things about the body; neither does it envision any future resurrection of that “prison.” The very word “prison” is inflammatory; couched in modern terms, we could ask why anyone would want to resurrect Alcatraz so that he might once again occupy cellblock 25?! This is how they viewed the body: as cellblock 25. Scripture teaches that it is the grave that is the real prison—not the body. The pathetic Greek view of the body was influenced not only by Gnostic thinking which despised matter as evil, but also by a confounding of the good and the sinister usages of the word “flesh” in the New Testament (*Gal. 5:19; Ac. 2:30-31*). Its modern equivalent is those who despise the body, such as monastics, or those who mistreat their bodies by the neglect of the right foods or exercise or over-indulgence, such as gluttons and drunkards. An old expression of this contempt for the body is the doctrine that our souls preexisted before our bodies. The idea here is that the body was made only to house the all-important soul. A recent expression of contempt for the body was the thirty-nine self-murderers in Rancho Sante Fe who wanted to be liberated from their bodies to reach the “next level.” They justified the exit of their spirits by demeaning their bodies as mere “containers.”

“Consistency”

The second attraction of Hymenæism is that it is ostensibly consistent (given the erroneous premise that the Second Coming of Christ has already occurred). Scripture does teach that the Second Coming and the resurrection of the body are simultaneous events (*1 Cor. 15:23*). In this passage Paul writes, “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.” If the only coming of Christ is His A.D. 70 spiritual coming, then the resurrection must have occurred then too. Hymenæans are therefore compelled to merge Christ's Second Coming at the end of human history with his A.D. 70 coming. Virtually all of the “comings” of Christ in the New Testament are seen through Hymenæan glasses.

The new Hymenæan view parallels the Hymenæism of Paul's day except that we know more about its details. The new Hymenæans do teach the Second Coming of Christ and the general Judgment during the last days. There is the “up-front” declaration that these doctrines are true—but again with the

caveat that they are “already past.” Some Hymenæans even assert that all the eschatology of the Bible is fulfilled and “all is perfect” in the New Testament era—a statement that exudes a tinge of Christian Science and naivete.

Overreaction to Dispensationalism

The third attraction of Hymenæism stems from an overreaction to dispensationalism, together with its esoteric charts and graphs, which include one false prediction after another. The church has been listening to the voices of Darby, Scofield, Hal Lindsey, Dave Hunt, Ryrie, Jack Van Impe, and Chafer, etc., for over 150 years. Whereas the hallmark of dispensationalism is elaborate charts and comic-book scenarios of the future, the Hymenæans have no charts at all. For them there is nothing to think about; all prophecy is fulfilled—no charts at all. Life is easy. Eschatology is the easiest of all. They peer into the future and see nothing. They speak of all prophecy as “fulfilled eschatology.” One Hymenæan writer even tells us that the “hope of the resurrection” is an “empty” hope and an empty expectation, and that with regard to the future the Christian turns over the next leaf “and there is nothing.” Amazingly, the followers of Hymenæus have chosen to combat dispensational eschatology with an eschatology that dispenses with eschatology!

Matthew 24

Jesus' Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 highlights a Hymenæan interpretation versus a true, preterist interpretation. Our Lord completes the first part of His sermon with the famous “Time-Text,”—“Verily, verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled.” The orthodox preterist interpretation is that everything that occurred before verse 34 saw its fulfillment in that generation—the contemporary generation of Jews. However, the Hymenæans merge everything that occurs after verse 34 into the A.D. 70 spiritual coming of Christ. For example, Hymenæans argue that even verse 36 is about A.D. 70, when Jesus states, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” The problems with this viewpoint are explained adequately by Marcellus Kik in his *Eschatology of Victory*, and the reader is urged to review his arguments. Echoing Kik, we affirm that the designated “that day” does not refer to the days of tribulation for Israel prior to the coming of the Romans. The reason is that “that day” had already been introduced by our Lord earlier, even as far back as the Sermon on the Mount. For example, the Lord tells us that not every one who says unto Him, “Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven,” and that “many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (*Mt. 7:21-23*). Earlier in Matthew, the Lord compared Israel's judgment with some of the historic cities that were notable for wickedness. Christ preached, “But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you.” And again, “But it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee” (verse 22, 24). Christ had already drilled the “that day of judgment” terminology into the heads of the disciples, which they would have understood as

including Sodom and Tyre and Sidon on a day other than A.D. 70. Certainly Tyre and Sidon and Sodom were not judged in A.D. 70. In the Matthean account of the Olivet Discourse, “that day” is an explicit reference to the great day when God will judge all past, present, and future generations. Paul also in his sermon to the Greeks on Mars’ Hill preached “a day” that God will judge all men (Athenians included—not just Jews) by that Man Whom He has appointed (*Ac. 17:31*).

The best commentary on the “that day” terminology of verse 36 is both what follows verse 36 and what flows from verse 36. There are several parables that follow verse 36, the Faithful Servant and Evil Servant (24:45-51), the Wise and Foolish Virgins (25:1-13), and the Talents (25:14-30). This string of Second Coming parables is capped off with the picture of the Son of Man judging the nations “when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory” (25:31). When he comes “all nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats” (25:2). Christ’s coming to judge all nations does not merely follow Matthew 24:36 in chronological sequence—it flows from it.

Interestingly, both dispensationalists and Hymenæns have adopted an all-or-nothing approach: the former interpret virtually every coming of Christ prophesied in the New Testament as the Second Coming; the latter interpret every prophesied coming as Christ’s A.D. 70 spiritual coming. There are then dispensational eschatologists and dispensable eschatologists.

The “dispensable eschatology” of the Hymenæns also dispenses with the resurrection of the believer’s body at Christ’s Second Coming. Beginning with the premise that there is only one coming of Christ (A.D. 70) they force all other parousia-texts into an A.D. 70 straitjacket. This forces them to deny the resurrection of the flesh and to wrest the meaning of 1 Corinthians 15. Scripture teaches that what makes the Second Coming of Christ the “blessed hope” is not a bare, physical coming of our Lord. The “blessed hope” is not only tied to the “hope of the resurrection,” but is colored and defined by the resurrection (*1 Cor. 15:19; Ac. 23:6; 26:6; 2:26; 1 Thes. 4:13ff*). It is only because of the resurrection of the body that we will be able to see the Lord and be caught up with the Lord in the air. This was the faith of Martha who said, “I know that he [Lazarus] shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day” (*Jn. 11:24*), and the repeated teaching of Christ who taught, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (*Jn. 6:40, 44, 54*). The Hymenæns repeatedly fail to distinguish between the “last days” of Israel and “the last day” at the end of this world. This in turn causes them to trivialize the resurrection of Christ and to discount the believer’s bodily resurrection altogether.

Misunderstanding Paul

A fourth attraction of Hymenæism is based upon a misinterpretation of Paul’s statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, where he writes, “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them which are asleep.” Devotees of Hymenæus argue that Paul believed that he and others would escape death to witness the Second Coming. It is then urged

that the Parousia had to occur during Paul’s lifetime. There are innumerable problems with this interpretation. First, not only would Paul have to be alive, but everyone in the church at Thessalonica to whom he was writing, too (he did say “we” which are alive). If we dogmatically assert that Paul experienced the Parousia, then we must dogmatically assert the same for all his readers. If so much as one of his readers was cut off by death before the Parousia, then we could not rule out the possibility that Paul himself (as well as all the Thessalonians) might have died before the advent of the Lord. Clearly, Paul is not telling the Thessalonians that each of them would escape death to experience the A.D. 70 coming. 1 Thessalonians may in fact have been the first letter that Paul ever wrote—perhaps twenty years before the destruction of Jerusalem. The reason he speaks of himself and them (the Thessalonians) as “living” is because he must distinguish between the living and the dead. His goal is to impart comfort to the living, not because he knew that the living would be alive when Christ returned, but because the living needed to know that their dead would be the “first” beneficiaries of the Second Advent (*1 Thes. 4:16*). His purpose is to impart comfort to the living about their dead (this is why he numbers himself with the living), not to prophesy that his generation would escape death altogether.

Another problem with the Hymenæus interpretation of 1 Thessalonians 4:15 is that this very epistle was read by other Christians too. It was to be read by “all the holy brethren” (*1 Thes. 5:26-27*). Keep in mind that the influence and therefore the fellowship of the Thessalonian Christians was great: this church was an example to “to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe” (*1 Thes. 1:7*). From this church the word of the Lord (which included “the word of the Lord” spoken to Paul about the Parousia and the resurrection—*1 Thes. 4:15*) “sounded forth” “in every place” (1:18). According to Hymenæus logic, every pre-A.D. 70 Christian who read 1 Thessalonians 4:15 would beat the grim reaper to be alive at Christ’s A.D. 70 coming.

The disciples of Hymenæus argue that all of Matthew 24 is about A.D. 70. Christ’s coming to judge Israel is the Second Advent, they claim. Yet, Jesus says in Matthew 24:36, “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.” If, as the Hymenæns assert, the “that day” of verse 36 applies to the A.D. 70 coming (which not even Christ in His human nature was privy to), how could Paul and all the Thessalonians know that they would escape death to experience it?

The Hymenæns also have an insurmountable difficulty meshing 1 Thessalonians 4:17 with 1 Corinthians 15:52, which reads, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Notice: whereas in 1 Thessalonians 4:15 Paul speaks of himself as possibly alive when Christ returns, in 1 Corinthians 15:52 he speaks of himself as bodily “resurrected” when Christ returns. Paul’s intent is not to declare that he would be dead when Christ returned, any more than he would be living at his return. He is merely identifying himself with the people of God. Paul no doubt had a certain knowledge either that he would be alive or that he would be a participant in the resurrection after his death, but that certain knowledge is not the same as saying that he knew for sure which one of these alternatives would be his lot.

Also, nowhere does the Bible state that the bodily resurrection of all believers “is near,” is “at hand,” is “close.” However, there is a statement describing the heretics who assert that the resurrection is “already past”—the Hymenæns!

Satanic Pride

The fifth reason for Hymanæn theology is Satanic pride, a desire to pass muster before men. Heretics love novelties. The pride in this case is not just opposing the resurrection theology of the Bible, but the craving to make a name for oneself—the desire to have the preeminence, that is, the spirit of Diotrophes (3 Jn. 9). The pride factor is particularly easy to spot in the Hymenæns, for they are obsessed with a resurrectionless preterism. It extends further than identifying oneself as a “preterist” on the guest registrar of the church. The Hymenæns are campaigning to “subvert” the Faith of others. Believing that they have discovered some new truth that has been hidden from the church for the last 2000 years, we can well understand their zeal. In Paul’s last words to the elders at Ephesus, he wept, stating that after his departure, grievous wolves would enter in, and from even their own selves “shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Ac. 20:30). Since Paul was writing to Timothy who was probably in Ephesus, we can identify Hymenæus and Philetus as two of these invaders.

What Is a Resurrection?

Because of the simultaneity of Christ’s coming and the believer’s resurrection, the Hymenæns are forced to redefine the word “resurrection.” For example, R.C. Leonard and J.E. Leonard in their book, *The Promise of His Coming*, define “resurrection” as following:

The New Testament term for resurrection, *anastasis*, is not a theological word but is related to the verb *stenai* Paul employs in the above passage [Eph. 6:11-13]. In ancient Greek literature, *stenai* is sometimes used in the sense of rising up in protest or rebellion. Resurrection or *anastasis* is literally “standing again” in defiance of enemy powers, and thus contains an element of vindication. (181)

The Leonards then quote Acts 2:23-24, where Peter argues that after Jesus was crucified, that “God raised Him up again. . . .” Thus, for the Leonards “resurrection” means vindication. What they call only “a feature” about Christ’s resurrection becomes the leading motif so that his bodily resurrection is diminished. For the Leonards, the real victory of Christ was not his overcoming physical death, but his standing up for his cause. Their notion that *anastasis* (“resurrection”) is not a theological word is both unwarrantable and astounding! The weakness of their whole argument is shown by the appeal to the Greek outside the Bible and even that is indirect—the best they can do is relate *anastasis* to the Greek verb *stenai*, which even by their own admission is used infrequently outside the Bible. Therefore, what is universally defined in the New Testament as a resurrection of the flesh, plays second fiddle to Christ as a mere champion and rebel. Of course, every interpreter of the New Testament ought to know that it is the context of the New Testament itself that colors and defines a word. What kind of

credibility can a person have who would argue that the Greek word for resurrection is “not a theological word”?! The Leonards both dodge and discount the word *anastasis* as it is used throughout the Bible.

Hymenæns compound their error about the resurrection further when they argue that all of 1 Corinthians 15 is a description of the spiritual resurrection of Israel during the last days of Israel’s existence. The Leonards tells us:

All of this shows that, for the New Testament writers, the resurrection is an ongoing process. It corresponds to the fulfillment in Christ of God’s promises to Israel during the last days of the old covenant period. Resurrection is accomplished “by the Spirit” and is a progressive overcoming of sin-death (*Ibid*, 171).

Not only is Israel not mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15; there is no Scripture proof that resurrection is “a progressive overcoming of sin-death.” Resurrection is connected to crucifixion and is as once-for-all as the death of Christ on the cross. That the Leonards see 1 Corinthians 15 as having its fulfillment in the A.D. 70 experience of Israel makes them the contemporary disciples of Hymenæus.

Does all this mean that the Leonards rule out a future, bodily resurrection? They claim that while the Scriptures do not teach a future bodily resurrection, nevertheless, “fulfilled eschatology does not take issue with a bodily resurrection” (*Ibid* 177). This cavalier concession should not impress us, for it goes no further than the old Sadducean error. Alfred Edersheim recounts:

...the Talmud expressly states that the real principle of the Sadducees was not, that there was no resurrection, but only that it could not be proved from the Torah, or Law. From this there was, of course, but a short step to the entire denial of the doctrine; and no doubt it is taken by the vast majority of the party” (*Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, 241).

Also, we should note that the comment about not taking issue with a bodily resurrection is more a concession than a confession. Paul did not concede the resurrection; Paul proclaimed both the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the believer (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

1 Corinthians 15

The error of making the resurrection refer to the resurrection of man’s spirit or to the resurrection of Israel is an attack on the resurrection of Christ himself, for if Christ’s resurrection is a true paradigm of ours, then his and ours must be identical. The believer’s bodily resurrection is tied to the resurrection of Christ, whose resurrection is the down payment of ours (1 Cor. 15:1-9). 1 Corinthians 15 teaches that Christ is the “firstfruits of all that slept” and that “every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits: afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (vs. 20, 23). This is proven not only by the word “firstfruits” which means that the first sheaf is the same as the others in the resurrection harvest, but the fact that the first part of 1 Corinthians 15 defines Christ’s resurrection in terms of his body. He rose again on the third day (v. 4), he arose according to the Scriptures (verse 4—which would include such Psalms as Psalm 16 where the “flesh” of Christ is stated), and he was “seen” (v. 5-8).

Not surprisingly, many Hymenæns do in fact spiritualize Christ's resurrection. This is done in two ways: (1) It may be argued that Christ arose in spirit and that his post-resurrection appearances were in a temporary bodily form that he assumed after his spirit-resurrection. Therefore all of the physical appearances of our Lord after his spirit-resurrection were not, according to them, in the same body in which he was crucified. (2) The students of Hymenæus will also argue that the body of Christ was a "spiritual body" (meaning a non-physical body). This conclusion is made on the basis of 1 Corinthians 15:44, where Paul writes that "it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body."

How shall we respond to the Hymenæus "resurrection" theology? To begin with, not all Hymenæns are as consistently heretical as they should be. Not all boldly dispute the physical resurrection of Christ. Some seem non-committal; others are slippery; others (the Leonards) see vindication for a cause as the central motif; still others have imbibed the historic Anabaptist idea that God created a new body for Christ (his resurrection not being a resurrection so much as a new creation). Yet, whatever the nuance of their heinous error, they do in fact argue against it when they deny the bodily resurrection of the believer. Paul deduced that if our bodies are not raised up, then Christ is not raised up (*1 Cor. 15:16*). The reluctance of every Hymenæus to come to grips with his error resembles the deniers of the virgin birth of Christ, who would argue against the virgin birth, and yet claim both the impeccability of Christ and the full Deity of Christ. It is not difficult to see that the belief that Jesus was begotten by an earthly father threatens the doctrine of His impeccability. Also, how can a man with a naturalistic origin be a supernatural Savior? Likewise, if we disclaim the future resurrection of the believer, we are in fact repudiating the historic resurrection of Christ, no matter how much we protest to the contrary.

Let us not imagine that the Hymenæus movement is monolithic either. Hymenæns who claim the title "consistent preterist" disagree with other Hymenæns who claim the same. While all Hymenæns agree that the resurrection is "already past," not all formally disclaim the resurrection of Christ in the flesh. They may discount the importance of Christ's resurrection, but not all discount its factuality. Other Hymenæns argue for the discontinuation of the Lord's Supper since Christians are to partake of the Supper "till He come" (*1 Cor. 11:26*). Thus Hymenæns themselves do not have a uniform definition of a "consistent preterist."

Second, the belief of many Hymenæns that Jesus took upon himself only a temporary body after His spirit-resurrection fails to answer some significant questions. The Hymenæns have no explanation as to what became of the body of Christ after his ascension: as far as they are concerned, it may have peeled off like a space-capsule. Also, this does not explain the empty tomb. If the resurrection of Christ was a spirit-resurrection, why was the tomb empty? The empty tomb speaks tons about the physical resurrection. The fact that there were still holes in the side of Christ and imprints of nails in his hands testifies that the body that was crucified was the same body that was resurrected (*Jn. 20:25, 27*). Christ describes himself as body when he challenged his disciples, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself:

handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet" (*Lk. 24:39-40*). Notice: Christ describes himself as "I" in the bodily sense, even denying that he is a "spirit." There is no spirit-resurrection here.

Third, the "spiritual body" of the believer does not mean that the believer will possess a non-physical body. The contrast in 1 Corinthians 15 is not between a physical body and a non-physical body. Paul's contrast is between a "natural body" and a "spiritual body." What is a "natural body?" The answer is a body that is susceptible to death, pain, etc. A "flesh and blood" natural body is different from a "flesh and blood" spiritual body because the spiritual body is raised up by the same Spirit that raised Jesus and is incapable of dying (*Rom. 8:11*). Christ was not raised up a spirit, but a "spiritual body." As Zacharias Ursinus wrote:

The apostle means by a spiritual body, not that which is changed into the Spirit, or which is in all its properties equal to the Spirit, but that which is ruled by the Spirit of God, which is immortal and free from all misery, adorned with heavenly splendor, glory, activity, strength, and holiness.

Augustine is also most helpful. He wrote:

We must not imagine that because the Apostle says that the body which we have in the resurrection will be spiritual, that it will be purely spiritual without any body. But he calls that a spiritual body, which is wholly subject to the Spirit, and which is free from corruption and death; For when he calls the body which we now have a natural body, we must not suppose that it is not a body, but a soul. Therefore as the body which we now have is called natural, because it is subject to the soul, and cannot be called spiritual, because it is not yet fully subject to the Spirit, as long as it may be corrupted, so it will then be called spiritual, when it will not be able with any corruption to resist the Spirit.

Perhaps sensing the consistency problem, some Hymenæns are toying with the idea that there may not even have been an incarnation of Christ too. Others assert that the resurrection of Christ was spiritual. Despite certain discontinuities in the movement, all Hymenæns diminish the body—believing that the body is extraneous to man's being. This obviously raises questions about their overall view about Christ's Person and work. To be a truly consistent, Hymenæus preterist, one should deny the flesh of Christ from cradle-to-grave, resurrection to Second Coming.

So, it is important to understand that the Hymenæus movement is a Christological error as well as a prophetic error. The fall of just one "incarnation-domino" will lead to the fall of a second domino, etc. No Second Coming in the flesh means no resurrection of the flesh and no resurrection of the flesh means there is no incarnation. Watch the dominoes fall! We have here a "dispensable Christology" as well as a "dispensable eschatology."

Paul's Assessment of Hymenæus Theology

How then should we treat those who embrace Hymenæism and yet claim to wear the badge of Christianity? We must look

to Paul's charge to Timothy. Paul tells us that the Hymenæns have "erred with respect to the truth" (2 Tim. 2:18). Erring with regard to the truth means that we have erred about the "truth of the Gospel." His description of the Hymenæns is not that they have erred with respect to one truth among many Gospel truths. On the contrary, their error is a capital error; the whole truth has been denied.

Their preterist resurrection theology has overthrown the faith of some. This is a powerful indictment. Not merely the faith by which we believe, but The Faith that we believe is defeated, destroyed.

The teachings of the Hymenæns are labeled a "canker," a gangrene, perhaps a cancer. The Greek word could be a medical word or a word describing oxidation. If the former, then, the church is compared to a living organism. A malignancy or a gangrene can only destroy this organism! Hymenæan theology is a cancer in the living organism of the church.

Hymenæns also make "shipwreck" of the Faith (1 Tim. 1:19). The shipwreck is a religious shipwreck. Hymenæism is not a mere pinhole in the hull of the good ship salvation.

The upshot is that we should not be referring to the disciples of Hymenæus as "beloved brethren," as "good friends," as "dear Christian brethren." They are the enemies of Christ and the enemies of the church. The "sons of the resurrection" should not be taken unawares. Hymenæns who are members in Christian churches should be disciplined for their error, even delivered over to Satan so that they would not blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:20).

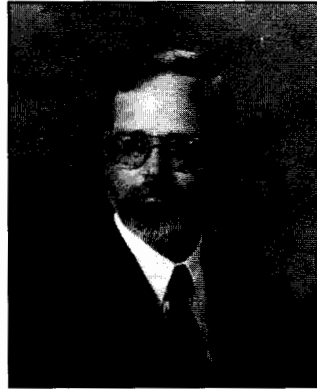
If a church unwittingly carries Hymenæan books (such as the Leonards' *The Promise of His Coming*, or J. Stuart Russell's *The Parousia*), these books should be torched or removed immediately. No church should pray God's speed on the disciples of Hymenæus. If a church has Hymenæan members, let her admonish or rebuke these subverters at once. We dare not give them the Lord's Supper. We must not let them get away with calling themselves "preterists" or "consistent preterists," or believers in "fulfilled eschatology." The word "preterist" is a good word. The disciples of Hymenæus are not preterists; their "dispensable eschatology" makes them heretics. What is more, they are antichrists; for only the spirit of antichrist says that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh (1 Jn. 4ff). When we interview new members, we need to question them about Christ's resurrection and ours. Hymenæns are not our friends; they are the enemies of the cross. If we deny the future resurrection of the body then we deny the resurrection of Christ. And if we deny the resurrection of Christ's flesh, then we deny his accomplishment on the cross. The design of Christ's bodily resurrection was to implement His sacrifice on the cross, when He suffered the wrath of God in his body and in his soul. He came to redeem us in body and in soul (Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 6:20).

Hymenæism is damnable heresy.

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A Brief Theological Analysis of Hyper-Preterism

By *Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr.*



From time to time I receive letters from men declaring themselves "Reconstructionist" and "consistent preterist." The "consistent preterist" believes that all prophecy is fulfilled in the A. D. 70 destruction of the Temple, including the Second Advent, the resurrection of the dead, the great Judgment, and so forth. Due to my primary writing ministry against rapidly changing dispensationalism, I have not had time to deal extensively with the issue, but I do have some random thoughts that I will make public in this article. These thoughts are based on readings from their monthly publications and books, of which I have a great number.

Let me begin by noting that, in the first place, I do not know how anyone could credibly claim to be postmillennial and hyper-preterist, nor do I understand how he could claim to be Reconstructionist, while maintaining his hyper-preterism. If all prophecy was fulfilled in the first-century events, then who is to say it is the will of God for the gospel to exercise worldwide victory? There is no remaining word of prophecy to inform us of such. Furthermore, the hyper-preterist position cannot be theonomic in that in its view the Law came to fulfillment in the passing away of the Jewish order (Mt. 5:17-19). So a hyper-preterist cannot be a Reconstructionist (theonomic postmillennialist) on exegetical grounds (although his heart might wish for the Reconstructionist world view).

The full failure of the First Adam must be overcome by the full success of the Second Adam.

Furthermore, there are numerous exegetical and theological problems I have with the hyper-preterist viewpoint. I deem my historic, orthodox preterism to be exegetical preterism (because I find specific passages calling for specific preterist events); I deem Max King and Ed Stevens' views to be theological preterism or comprehensive preterism (they apply exegetical conclusions drawn from several eschatological

passages to all eschatological passages, because of their theological paradigm). Let me quickly list some of my present objections; it is hoped that I will later find time to sit down and work on this whole issue (since dispensationalism is in such radical transition and I have a ministry toward dispensationalists, I have tended to focus any spare time I can afford on dispensationalism).

Creedal Failure

First, hyper-preterism is heterodox. It is outside the creedal orthodoxy of Christianity. No creed allows any second Advent in A. D. 70. No creed allows any other type of resurrection than a bodily one. Historic creeds speak of the universal, personal judgment of all men, not of a representative judgment in A. D. 70. It would be most remarkable if the entire church that came through A. D. 70 missed the proper understanding of the eschaton and did not realize its members had been resurrected! And that the next generations had no inkling of the great transformation that took place! Has the entire Christian church missed the basic contours of Christian eschatology for its first 1900 years?

Biblical Perspicuity

Second, hyper-preterism has serious implications for the perspicuity of Scripture. This viewpoint not only has implications for the later creeds, but for the instructional abilities of the apostles: no one in church history knew the major issues of which they spoke — until very recently! Are the Scriptures that impenetrable on an issue of that significance? Clement of Rome lived through A. D. 70 and had no idea he was resurrected! He continued to look for a physical resurrection (*Clement 50:3*). Jude's (supposed) grandsons still sought a physical resurrection (*cf. Eusebius, EH 3:24:4*). Whoever these men were, they came right out of the first generation and in the land of Israel — with absolutely no inkling of an A. D. 70 resurrection or a past second Advent. See also the Didache 10:5; 16:1ff (first century); Ignatius; Trallians 9:2; Smyrnaens 2:1; 6:1; Letter to Polycarp 3:2 (early second century); Polycarp 2:1; 6:2; 7:1. See also Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr.

Berkouwer rightly notes that the reason the resurrection found early creedal acceptance was because of the clear emphasis of the New Testament. The hyper-preterist view has serious and embarrassing implications for the perspicuity of Scripture — and despite the fact that we are now (supposedly) in our resurrected states and have the outpoured Holy Spirit and his gift of teachers who were to protect us from every wind of doctrine (*Eph. 4*)!

No Canon

Third, the hyper-preterist system leaves the New Covenant Christian (in our post-A. D. 70 era) without a canon. If all prophecy was fulfilled prior to A. D. 70 and if the entire New Testament spoke to issues in the pre-A. D. 70 time frame, we do not have any directly relevant passages for us. The entire New Testament must be transposed before we can use it.

Hermeneutic Failure

Fourth, hyper-preterism suffers from serious errors in its hermeneutical methodology. When a contextually defined passage applies to the A. D. 70 event, the hyper-preterist will take all passages with similar language and apply them to A.D. 70, as well. But similarity does not imply identity; Christ cleansed the temple twice and in virtually identical ways; but the two events are not the same. Furthermore, we must distinguish sense and referent; there are several types of “resurrection” in Scripture: the dry bones of Ez. 37; spiritual redemption in John 5:24; physical redemption at the grave in John 5:28; Israel's renewal in Christ in Rom. 11:15; and of the Beast in Rev. 13:3. I hold that passages specifically delimiting the time-frame by temporal indicators (such as “this generation,” “shortly,” “at hand,” “near,” and similar wording) are to be applied to A. D. 70, but similar-sounding passages may or may not be so applied.

Resurrection Errors

Fifth, there is a serious problem with the removal of the physical resurrection from systematic theology. Christ's resurrection is expressly declared to be the paradigm of our own (*1 Cor. 15:20ff*). Yet we know that his was a physical, tangible resurrection (*Lk. 24:39*), whereas ours is (supposedly) spiritual. What happens to the Biblically defined analogy between Christ's resurrection and ours in the hyper-preterist system?

Clement of Rome lived through A. D. 70 and had no idea he was resurrected!

Anthropological Errors

Sixth, there are numerous other theological and exegetical problems with a spiritual-only resurrection. For one thing, the hyper-preterist view tends to diminish the significance of the somatic implications of sin: Adam's sin had physical effects, as well as judicial and spiritual effects; where are these taken care of in the hyper-preterist system? Death's implications are not just judicial and spiritual, but also physical (*Gen. 3:14, 19; Rom. 6:23*). If Christians now are fulfilling the resurrection expectation of Scripture, then the gnostics of the early Christian centuries were correct! The physical world seems to be superfluous, in the hyper-preterist viewpoint. The anthropology of hyper-preterism is defective in this, not allowing the theological significance of the body/soul nature of man (*Gen. 2:7*). This can also have implications for the person of Christ and the reality of his humanity.

Piercing Questions

Seventh, regarding the teaching of Christ and the Apostles, we must wonder why Paul was mocked by the Greeks in Acts 17 for believing in the resurrection, if it were

not a physical reality. We must wonder why Paul aligned himself with the Pharisees on the issue of the resurrection (*Ac. 23:6-9; 24:15, 21*). We must wonder why we Christians still marry and are given in marriage, since Christ said in the resurrection we will not marry (*Lk. 20:35*). We must wonder why the apostles never corrected the widespread notion of a physical resurrection, which was so current in Judaism (cf. Josephus, Talmud, etc.). We must wonder why we “resurrected” Christians must yet die; why should we not leave this world like Enoch and Elijah? Furthermore, where and what is the resurrection of the lost (*Jn. 5; Rev. 20*)? Paul considered Hymenæus and Philetus as having made shipwreck of men’s faith by saying the resurrection is past (*2 Tim. 2:17-18*). A wrong view of the resurrection is a serious matter to Paul.

Effects of the Resurrection

Eighth, practically I wonder on the hyper-preterist view what the difference our resurrection makes in this life? We get ill and are weak on the same scale as those prior to the A. D. 70 resurrection. Did this glorious resurrection of the “spiritual body” have no impact on our present condition? A hyper-preterist analysis might leave us to expect that Paul looked to A. D. 70 as an agent of relief from the groanings and the temptations of the flesh (*Rom. 7:25*), yet we still have such — despite the supposed resurrection.

We have express Biblical warrant to expect a visible, bodily, glorious return of Christ paralleling in kind the ascension. The hyper-preterist position goes contrary to this clear teaching of Scripture.

Christology Implications

Ninth, Acts 1 clearly defines Christ’s second Advent in terms of his ascension, which was physical and visible. For example, in Acts 1:8-11 Luke is careful to say the disciples were “beholding” him as he ascended; he was received “from the eyes of them” (v. 9b); they were “gazing” as he was “going” (v. 10); they were “looking” (v. 11); they “beheld” (v. 11). Clearly his ascension was a visible and glorious phenomenon involving his tangible resurrected body. And there was an actual visible cloud associated with it (v. 10). The angelic messengers resolutely declare “this same Jesus” (*i.e.*, the Jesus they knew for over three years, who is now in a tangible resurrected body) will “so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven” (v. 11). The Greek *on tropon* literally means “what manner.” The Greek phrase “never indicates mere certainty or vague resemblance; but

wherever it occurs in the New Testament, denotes identity of mode or manner” (A. Alexander, *Acts, ad loc.*). Consequently, we have express Biblical warrant to expect a visible, bodily, glorious return of Christ paralleling in kind the ascension. The hyper-preterist position goes contrary to this clear teaching of Scripture.

A Brief Millennium

Tenth, if A. D. 70 ends the Messianic reign of Christ (cf. the hyper-preterist view of 1 Cor. 15:24, 28), then the glorious Messianic era prophesied throughout the Old Testament is reduced to a forty-year interregnum, whereas by all accounts it is a lengthy, glorious era. A problem with premillennialism is that it reduces Christ’s reign to 1000 literal years; hyper-preterism reduces it further to forty years! The prophetic expressions of the kingdom tend to speak of an enormous period of time, even employing terms that are frequently used of eternity. Does Christ’s kingdom parallel David’s so that it only lasts for the same time frame?

History and Church Errors

Eleventh, hyper-preterists eternalize time, by allowing history to continue forever. This not only goes against express statements of Scripture, but also has God dealing with a universe in which sin will dwell forever and ever and ever. There is no final conclusion to the matter of man’s rebellion; there is no final reckoning with sin. Christ tells us that the judgment will be against rebels in their bodies, not “spiritual” bodies (*Mt. 10:28*). The hyper-preterist system does not reach back far enough (to the Fall and the curse on the physical world) to be able to understand the significance of redemption as it moves to a final, conclusive consummation, ridding the cursed world of sin. The full failure of the First Adam must be overcome by the full success of the Second Adam.

Ecclesiastical Labor

Twelfth, hyper-preterism has serious negative implications for ecclesiastical labor. Is the Great Commission delimited to the pre-A. D. 70 era, due to the interpretation of “the end” by hyper-preterists (*Mt. 28:20*)? Is the Lord’s Supper superfluous today, having been fulfilled in Christ’s (alleged) Second Advent in A. D. 70 (*1 Cor. 11:26*)?

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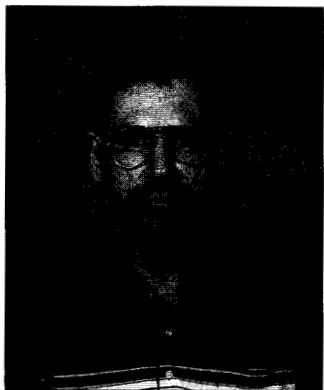
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Interpreting Prophecy: The Canonical Principle

By Joseph P. Braswell



Dispensationalists often accuse covenantalists of reading the New Testament back into the Old Testament. If this charge means that covenantalists read the OT *in light* of the NT, it is readily conceded. Covenantalists believe that the very idea of a *progressive* revelation requires that we read the earlier in light of the later,¹ that we use the greater light provided by later

stages to help us understand that which was given only in a shadowy way, in seed form, in previous times. We ought to use the advantage of maturity and the increase of knowledge.

Dispensationalists, on the other hand, claim to read the OT on its own terms, taking it literally (the *sensus literalis*) according to what the authorial intent behind a given OT text would have been, given the author's historical context. Dispensationalists are certain that covenantalists cannot practice historical-grammatical exegesis in their reading of OT prophecy, that they are engaging instead in something akin to the allegorical method (though typological exegesis may be a more accurate description). At any rate, dispensationalists are sure that covenantalists are engaged in *eisegesis* — artificially imposing the NT upon the OT — and are not reading the OT in a natural (*i.e., literal*) way, as the contemporaries of the prophet would have understood his message.

The Canonical Approach

The covenantalist approach, however, is *canonical*. It insists that we read the OT texts from a canonical perspective, that the normative interpretation of these texts is determined by the “macro-genre” of the canonical Scriptures of the Christian church (a literary *unit*) and how these smaller *subunits* (whether pericopae or books) communicatively function within this higher level of textual organization. We must read any text contained in Scripture according to the genre-conventions of this larger unit of canon and according to its structuring and shaping (and otherwise influencing) of the content — according to its *enkaptic* leading/directing-function over the various subunits whereby they are made to serve the canon. To say this is to say that the entire Bible — OT and NT — is *New-Covenant* canon and all the literature included in the Christian Bible is to be read from the stance of the New Covenant that constitutes them as canon and regulates their meaning as a narrative covenant of *New-Covenant* witness. Accordingly, what the dispensationalist is in effect proposing is that we read OT texts in a noncanonical way, and this is contrary to what the

New Testament teaches concerning the witness of all the Scriptures to Christ.

Before we examine NT teaching on this subject, however, we need to confront the question of authorial intention. Supposedly, covenantalist hermeneutics does not properly respect authorial intention in the special case of prophecy. We need, however, to face the great difficulties that are involved in discerning what that original intent is.

Even if we are enthusiastic proponents of a historical method and emphasize the role that background (*e.g.,* biographical data, socio-historico-cultural context) should play in the interpretation of literature, we must recognize our limited ability — especially in literature as ancient as the OT — to reconstruct the setting of a text and specify the influences upon the author, his motivations, etc. In interpreting the OT literature, with rare exceptions we are not likely to discover a great deal about the author apart from what the text reveals (and sometimes that is very little). In other words, we must approach the authorial intention through the text; it is for the most part only on the basis of information contained in the text, when this is viewed from a historical perspective as a relic or artifact — as historical evidence — and appropriate historical methods are brought to bear in its analysis, that we can learn anything about the author and what was in his mind to communicate.² Authorial intention is thus something of an ideal (and perhaps a very *elusive* ideal).

Yet is this really to be our ideal? That is, however important the authorial intention (if we mean merely the human author) is, do we really intend to reduce the meaning of the Scriptural *text* to this (human) authorial intention? Does understanding the function of the words that are recorded in the text according to their original meaning (= what the human speaker desired to communicate) on the occasion — within the specific historical context — in which he spoke them, exhaust their meaning and become normative for their meaning in the text (and relative to literary context, as opposed to merely historical context)? Does the original speaker's intent (the meaning of the utterance relative to the time uttered and the parties immediately addressed as audience) always and necessarily coincide with the meaning of the words within “the text,” the meaning intended by the author of the text that records the utterance? Moreover, what do we mean by “the text:” just the single composition (*e.g.,* the book of Isaiah) or the unity of the entire canon of Scripture? Which of these three contexts — time of utterance, its meaning in written form at the time of the composition of the text that records it, or its meaning-function in a broader literary whole — is normative?

The Historical-Critical Method

It is of course the *historical-critical* method that attempts to be *consistent* in ascertaining what the original author intended and what the original audience (or readership) understood — what it *could* understand — within the historical context that gave rise to the utterance or text. This method uses tools such as source-criticism, tradition-criticism, and (to some extent) form-criticism to isolate the original oral utterance and place it in historical context, and it uses form-criticism and (*especially*)

redaction-criticism and literary criticism to trace the later function of this saying (its enduring significance beyond the originative occasion) and, in particular, the way it is used and interpreted in an extant literary composition by the author of that text. The practitioner of this method will necessarily distinguish between the original intent of the speaker and the original intent of the author who subsequently committed the saying to writing, since original utterance and textualization occur at different times and in different circumstances and intend to address different parties.

The thoroughgoing historico-critical exegete believes the evangelical practitioner of historical-grammatical exegesis is quite inconsistent; authorial intent is restricted to the human author and thus intends only to address those who are his intended, primary audience/readers and their context of understanding. We cannot assert that this historical approach to meaning is the key to unlocking the sense of a text, only to turn around and assume a concomitancy involving a *divine* author (and *his* alleged intent) “in, with, and under” the human author that would make the human word revelational of any information that transcends the human element and its historical situatedness. We cannot as scientific historians simply assume a theological dogma — a matter of religious faith beyond the pale of critical reason — about revelation and inspiration, but must treat the documents as thoroughly human documents arising in history by historical forces, in the same historically conditioned way all human documents come to be. The evangelical is not being truly and thoroughly *historical*, it is held, for he is engaged in special pleading if he seeks to interpret the humanly authored text in such a way that would construe the human word as revelational of any information that transcends the capacities of the human element and its inherent historicity (the exhaustion of meaning in the historical conditioning, the reduction of meaning to the historical situation).

Accordingly, if we are to be truly *historical* in our exegesis, it is impossible that Isaiah intended to speak of the virgin birth of Jesus several centuries beyond his time, or that the contemporary audience/readership he addressed in the “oracle” of Is. 7:14 could have understood such a remote event as the sign to which he refers King Ahaz. The historical-grammatical exegete, believing what Matthew says, is hardly literal when he reads Is. 7:14 as a prediction of Jesus’ birth; if he speaks of the nativity story as the fulfillment of what Isaiah spoke, he “finds” a sense in the words of the prophet beyond what Isaiah meant to convey and an application Isaiah did not foresee. The evangelical reads Is. 7:14 as he does only because he believes what Mt. 1:23 asserts, and Matthew’s peshier exegesis (an interpretation based upon the LXX text) is not privileged, for, bracketing out the possibility of the “supernatural,” there is no warrant for believing that the human evangelist-theologian Matthew (writing many centuries later) had any special insight into the mind of the human prophet Isaiah.

It is difficult to know what Isaiah did or did not intend, to ascertain whether he knew the full meaning of his words as these are brought out by Matthew. Perhaps he did not (*1 Pet. 1:10-13*). However, if we accept the view that Isaiah’s words

were literally the very word of God (*2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16*) in a dual authorship of concomitancy (making the words both human and divine), we know what *God* intended by these words if we accept Matthew’s testimony as *also* the inspired word of God, the subsequent revelation by the Holy Spirit of the true meaning — the authoritative interpretation — of what God was speaking through Isaiah.

Clearly, divine authorial intent — something transcending the historical context — is what is decisive in understanding this prophecy canonically and so understanding it as Messianic prophecy. The word of God for Isaiah’s day — an occasioned or time-conditioned message that may as such have had a more proximate reference to a more imminent fulfillment-referent — does not exhaust the oracle. The proximate fulfillment (a sign to Ahaz) may have only been a *type* that, *partially* fulfilling the conditions of the sign, was divinely intended to prefigure and anticipate a greater, *eschatological*, antitypical fulfillment on a more remote horizon beyond Isaiah’s own ability to envision. That remote horizon of greater fulfillment, perhaps never conceived by Isaiah as contained in the words he spoke, is a fulfillment that *God* referred to by a foreshortening conflation of prophetic signs and horizons of reference.³

If this is the case, Isaiah’s understanding (or that of his contemporaries) is not normative for determining the canonical meaning of the Immanuel-oracle. Moreover, the canonical function of the prophecy (the reason why it is included in the canonical Scriptures) is not simply to serve as a historical record (documentation and preservation) of various words of God spoken at sundry times within and to specific periods in the history of the covenant people (a witness to Old-Covenantal revelation), but was itself revelation to the New-Covenant people of a New-Covenant event. Thus, the function of that word for the prophet’s day (its proximate reference) may not be identical to the ultimate reference (or fulfillment) that warrants its subsequent inclusion in the canon. The progress of revelation may disclose in subsequent stages that earlier prophets — earlier organs of revelation — spoke more than they knew, that their own “private” interpretation enjoys no special privilege, that the word of God that came to them as they were moved by the Holy Spirit looked beyond their limited historical horizon and exceeded their expectations and understandings, that the dual authorship posits a dual intention that does not allow a simple identification of God’s meaning and the prophets’ meaning. The prophets may only have seen in a glass darkly, knowing in part, while the *sensus plenior* that their words contained (because God spoke by the mouths of the prophets) was hidden from them and thus cannot be found in human authorial intent (note here the case of Caiaphas’ ironically prophetic words in *Jn. 11:49-51*).

As Christians we are to read the OT in light of the Christ-event. Christ has opened the OT Scriptures to us and shown us that their proper interpretation involves reading them as a witness to him (*Lk. 24:27, 44-46; Jn. 5:39; Mt. 13:17*). The meaning-content of the inscripturated, *theopneustic* Word is the *Word* (*Jn. 1:1*); the gospel narrative is the key that unlocks the message of Scripture. The truth-claims of a prophecy of Scripture (according to the divine intent of the Spirit who

moved the prophets) is that which the canonical witness of New-Covenant Scripture — the finished product, the end of the process of revelation in history — intends to assert as true. If we are controlled by that canonical truth-claim, we must read Scripture as *Promise and Fulfilment* centering on the Christ-event and thus read the Old Testament as having been captured by, and made captive to, the *enkapsis* of the New Covenant. Any other reading of the OT writings than a *New-Covenantal* reading illumined by the Spirit of Christ (imparting to us the mind of God, their ultimate author — *1 Cor. 2:9-16*) veils the revelation that is the proper canonical function of the OT within the Christian Bible (*2 Cor. 3:6-18*). Canonical interpretation is *Christocentric*. The sundry times and diverse manners in which God formerly spoke by the prophets were always controlled by his eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus (a *mystery* not revealed in former times as it has been in the NT revelation-event). The Son is the full and final word that all previous words anticipated and prepared for, and it is that New-Covenantal *Son-Word* that unifies and gives canonical significance to all that came before. Accordingly, canonical hermeneutics requires our reading the OT in light of the fuller NT revelation. This is what covenant theology attempts to do and what dispensationalists fail to do to the extent they are true to their professed hermeneutic.

Ultimately, then, however important historical background may be to exegesis, we must read the prophecies of Isaiah, *et al.* in terms of their literary context, within the perspective of the whole (the broadest genre-context). The whole within which these have their meaning is the whole of *tota scriptura* — the *canon*. The idea of the canon as a unified corpus, a single literary entity, provides a leading/directing function to all that is contained in the canonical collection, providing us with the *analogy of Scripture* as a limiting concept upon our interpretation of any part thereof in its function of contributing to the organic unity of the whole. It is the final redaction that reveals *divine* authorial intent. To ignore the *canonical* context is to read smaller textual units out of context and so misconstrue their God-asserted, canonical truth-claims — their Christological meaning.

The Bible Interprets Itself

The upshot of all this is that literalism cannot be given a criteriological status as the way we are to interpret texts. We must rather pay attention to the way the NT treats OT texts, learning our paradigms of interpretation from canonical examples of New-Covenantal interpretation. We must read the OT bearing in mind that what God promised to the patriarchs God has fulfilled in his raising up Jesus (*Ac. 13:32b-33a*) and that all the promises of God are affirmed as fulfilled in Christ (*2 Cor. 1:20*). We must look at the time inaugurated by the coming of Christ as the last days and time of eschatological fulfilment — the antitypical substance of which the Old Covenant was but the typological shadow. Recognizing this, we will understand, for example, that Isaiah 2:2-4 does not refer to fleshly Israel's future glory in a coming millennial age (a judeocentric reading), but to the result of Pentecost. We will not look to *another* New Covenant (to be made in the future

with fleshly Israel and Judah) as the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy, but will take literally what Hebrews tells us, even as we will accept at face value what Peter said at Pentecost regarding the prophecy of Joel 2. We will understand OT eschatological expectation as that which the NT gospel announces as fulfilled. We will not allow an abstract (self-contained, stand-alone) OT theology — an Old-Covenantal theology — to determine the shape of NT theology and Biblical theology as a whole, but we will use NT theology as a key to interpreting the OT and read the OT as a part of a whole Biblical Theology that is the canonical theology of the New Covenant, seeking to understand how the end was declared from the beginning and how the NT develops OT themes. Such is the reading of faith.

¹ Which by no means is to say that we are not to read the later in light of the earlier as well. The earlier is foundational and provides necessary background — context — for the later. It would be Marcionism to read the NT in isolation from the OT, as though the NT were not but the continuation of the story begun in the OT. One does not start a novel in the middle, but one may re-read earlier portions after finishing the novel, discovering in light of the conclusion the significance and meaning of earlier portions of the narrative that were not obvious on the first reading. Hindsight (a retrospective interpretation) is an illumined perspective in which we see things more clearly and have a better understanding of trajectories.

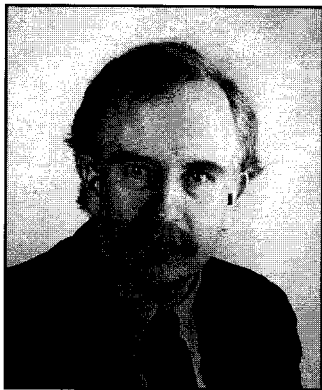
² Despite the difficulties involved, there is much to be said for the hermeneutical circle (or spiral) and its ability to make progress in understanding in many cases. We must recognize that this method, if employed properly and successfully, is not a case of vicious circularity that continues only to take us back to our original starting point without our gaining any new information. The method involves a dynamic, reflexive process of engagement that allows for ongoing revision and correction through continued "circling" from text to author and back to text, shifting from historical to literary questions at appropriate points in the circle so that the perspective we begin with (the text as historical data about the author and his situation) is not the same as the perspective we bring to the text as we "return" (now concerned with its meaning as literature). Background and meaning prove mutually illuminating; with each re-entry into the text the exegete carries with him the fruit of his previous excursions and can use this newly acquired knowledge as a key to unlock yet more insights and correct previous hypotheses.

³ We should note that what is figurative and what is literal in the correspondence of the prophetic utterance to the fulfillment-referent changes between the proximate and remote horizons of reference.

Joseph Braswell has done undergraduate and graduate work in philosophy at the University of South Florida, but his real interest is in theology and Biblical studies. He has published several articles in various journals (including the Westminster Theological Journal, the Journal of Christian Reconstruction, and the Chalcedon Report). He currently resides in Palatka, Florida and is engaged in research and writing.

The Church, Incorporation, Political Action, and the Endorsing of Political Candidates: An Opinion in Light of Biblical and Historical Analysis (Part 1)

By Jack Kettler



Incorporation is Not the Problem

This article grew out of a response to a series of questions sent to the Providence Orthodox Presbyterian Church. One question challenged the Session's (governing body of the local church) refusal to endorse certain political candidates. Another question had been raised concerning the church and its incorporation status. This individual thought that the Providence Church had incorporated, and this was the real reason for not endorsing political candidates. For the record, the Providence Church is not a 501 (c) (3) corporation. The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) denomination is; however, this article is not necessarily an attempt to defend Church incorporation *per se*. Many people believe that incorporated status on the part of churches is the source of the present-day political woes. False theological positions have caused present-day Christians to be culturally ineffective. Doctrinal decline and apostasy are the real root factors involved in our present Christian cultural impotence. The goal of this article is to help those who have naively assumed that incorporation is the source of the church's present problems. There may be reasons for churches not to incorporate. It is a fact that 501 (c) (3) incorporation status results in restrictions on political activity of churches. Has this caused the church to become unfaithful to Christ? What has been the historic view of Protestant churches regarding political involvement? This article will show that there are Biblical reasons for churches not taking certain political actions such as endorsing political candidates along with a historical view of incorporation. We will also briefly consider the legitimate role of the state. A number of questions will be raised that those who argue for disincorporation should answer. Have we cut ourselves off from the past wisdom and history of Christianity through our

ignorance? The doctrine and practice of Reformed churches (churches that originate from the Geneva wing of the Protestant Reformation) is used as a reference point in order to help gauge present-day debates.

The Biblical considerations should be understood as coming from a Reformed position. For those interested in an argument against church incorporation, they should consult the excellent two-part article titled "Introduction To the Concept, Attributes, and Definition of the Corporation."¹ This article takes a serious look at the dangers of church incorporation without making slanderous accusations. John Eidsmoe, in his *The Christian Legal Advisor*, and the Rutherford Institute have provided helpful information about incorporation and tax-exempt status issues. The information concerning churches and political activity is valuable.

The Church is Not Politics

The organized church should not engage in certain activity, such as endorsing political candidates. Individual Christians should be doing the minimum of intelligently voting. It is a great temptation for churches to endorse political candidates. For example, should the organized church have endorsed George Bush over Michael Dukakis? At the time, it may have seemed like a wise choice. In retrospect, it would have brought reproach on Christ's church for endorsing a public liar. Since churches cannot predict the future actions of political candidates, it is unwise for a church to place Christ's stamp of approval on a political candidate. The question concerning Christ's church endorsing political candidates is primarily a theological issue. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches have held to the position known as "sphere sovereignty." This position was formally developed by Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian statesman. Kuyper summarized sphere sovereignty as follows:

In order that the influence of Calvinism on our political development may be felt, it must be shown for what fundamental political conceptions Calvinism has opened the door, and how these political conceptions sprang from its root principle. This dominating principle was not, soteriologically, justification by faith, but, in the widest sense cosmologically, the Sovereignty of the Triune God over the whole Cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible. A primordial Sovereignty which radiates in mankind in a threefold deduced supremacy, *viz.*, 1. The Sovereignty in the State; 2. The Sovereignty in Society; 3. The Sovereignty in the Church.²

Kuyper's influence is still with us today through the apologetics of the late Dr. Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Seminary. Several of Kuyper's works are still in print. While he was one of the most powerful conservative pastor theologians, he entered politics and became prime minister of the Netherlands. The Reformed churches in the Netherlands did not endorse Dr. Kuyper's candidacy because of their adherence to the rudiments of the doctrine of sphere sovereignty. Sphere Sovereignty stated simply is that the state, church, and family are institutions created by and accountable to God. Each institution should not intrude into the sovereignty of the other institutions. For example, the state cannot pick candidates for church office. The elders of the

church cannot tell a family that their children should not eat "Wheaties." The church should not pick or endorse political candidates. There is little disagreement concerning the first two propositions, so why should Christians question the third? The genesis of sphere sovereignty existed in John Calvin (Protestant Reformer) and is continued in the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647). This is a distinguished Protestant confession.

Sphere sovereignty lies at the heart of and is fundamental to the Protestant doctrine of separation of powers. The spheres of sovereignty or authority must always be under God's authority. This doctrine of the separation of powers is clearly seen in Reformed church polity (government). For example, there are three layers of church courts: the first being the session of the local church, the second being the Presbytery or regional church court, and third the General Assembly, the highest court of appeal. This Protestant influence is also apparent in our American Constitutional Republic. For instance, we have three divisions or separations of powers, the Judiciary, Legislative, and Administrative.

Should a church endorse political candidates? Endorsing a political candidate as a church session would constitute the placing of Christ's endorsement on the candidate. When the session acts, it is functioning as Christ's representative. Christ governs his church through elders. Sessional members would be in violation of their ordination vows if they, acting in an official capacity, endorsed a candidate that held to some type of heresy. This would bring reproach on Christ. This does not mean that individual Christians and Christian leaders cannot support various political candidates. What would be involved for the church in this type of project? It would be absolutely essential for a session to interview the candidate to determine his faithfulness to Reformed theology or have assurance from a Reformed denomination with whom they have ecumenical relations that this type of interview had been completed to their satisfaction. Elders could not endorse a candidate that was beyond their ability to discipline. Time constraints are another important factor. Each endorsement would necessitate a substantial amount of time to be set aside for an examination, debate and possible training classes for the candidate. A process of this nature would cause other legitimate ministries of church elders to suffer, and would therefore be unacceptable. Once the church begins to violate the state's sphere of authority, it will only be a matter of time before some government bureaucrat wants to return the favor.

In addition, elders in Presbyterian churches are bound by confessional standards. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith in section 31:5 reads:

Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical; and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs, which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition, in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.³

It is true that this section of the confession is dealing with synods. If this is true of higher church courts, the lower courts, e.g., a session, should take great caution before ignoring this restriction. G. I. Williamson's comments at this point from his commentary on the Confession are helpful:

We believe that the following arguments are sufficient proof of the teaching of the Confession. (1) Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (*Jn. 18:36*). Christ not only made no effort to wield political power or to influence directly political events by making pronouncements on civil matters, but also when his followers tried to make him a political power he frustrated their attempt. Instead, he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. He taught that men must be changed, and that as they were changed they would leaven the social and political order (*Mt. 13:33*, etc.). (2) There is no evidence that the apostles or the apostolic church intermeddled in civil affairs. Even the Jerusalem Synod concluded nothing that was not ecclesiastical. (3) There is no Scripture teaching which warrants such interference in the affairs of the State on the part of the Church. The Reformed concept of "sphere sovereignty" is the scriptural teaching and it indeed recognizes that God is supreme in every realm or sphere of life.⁴

In Luke 12:13, 14 Jesus refused to rule on certain family or civil matters. Do we want the church to become another two-bit political organization? Christ is the head of the church. The church is instructed to imitate Him. We must preserve the spirituality of the church. Then can the church have any influence in the political realm? Consider Calvin's position:

The gospel is not to change the administration [policies] of the world, and to make laws which pertain to the temporal state. It is very true that Kings, Princes, and Magistrates ought always to consult the mouth of God and to conform themselves to His word; but our Lord has given them liberty to make the laws which they know to be proper and useful by the rule which is committed to them.⁵

Calvin elsewhere argued that the church had the authority to bring discipline against magistrates who were members of both societies. If a church member is an elected representative, he is still subject to the discipline of the church. Politicians in Geneva thought twice before promoting ungodliness. The church through its discipline can have influence politically. For example, politicians who vote to make abortions legal can be excommunicated from the church.

How the Church Influences Politics

What other ways can members of the church influence society? Westminster seminary professor Paul Woolley explains:

The Bible teaches that faith in God is the foundation for all attempts to meet human need. The Christian church meets the spiritual needs of men. It teaches them how to face their own relation to God and it teaches them how the grace of God operates. When that grace has worked in the heart of a man, he becomes concerned about human need. As a Christian citizen he, not the church, goes out to do battle with the social ills of men. The Christian must battle social ills. The church tells him so. They must be fought, and fought on Christian principles. But it is the citizen, not the church, who goes to war.⁶

The individual Christian is the one who takes and brings

forth the whole counsel of God to be applied in the realm of state, family and business. In the Old Testament we find Azariah, the chief priest, opposing king Uzziah (See *2 Chron. 26:18*). Does this happen today? In 1 Peter 2:5 we learn of the priesthood of all believers. Today's pastors and Christians can bring the word of God to political representatives. If God opens the doors to witness to politicians, we can declare the whole counsel of God. It is perfectly legal. For instance, Pastor Chuck McIlhenny (OPC) has witnessed to government officials. The church McIlhenny pastors and his home were set on fire by militant homosexuals in San Francisco. McIlhenny has stood fearlessly against pro-homosexual legislation (see *When the Wicked Seize a City* for the real-life story of a courageous pastor). J. Gresham Machen (OPC founder) testified before Congress concerning educational matters. Machen warned against further government involvement in education. The General Assembly of the OPC has petitioned the President and Congress concerning elections on Sunday, abortion, and, most recently, homosexuals in the military. The denomination's incorporated status has not stopped the church from being faithful to Christ. The Presbytery of New Jersey (regional OPC) is suing the state over a law forbidding the criticism of homosexuals in public places.

Can a church use a corporate structure safely? Consider a by-law of Providence Presbyterian Church that sets forth a well-thought-out view concerning incorporation and the state. This by-law sets forth the view that incorporation does not give the state a license to regulate the doctrine and Biblically based practice of the church. The following is an attempt to reassert the concept of a free "Ecclesiastical" corporation into the marketplace of ideas:

The use by this church of legal vehicles to relate to the civil government, including, but not limited to, the use of IRS 501 (c) (3) status, is done in recognition of the practical necessity of a method by which civil government entities may carry out their responsibility of distinguishing legitimate churches for purposes of recognizing such churches' tax immunity and other legal protection, while at the same time retaining their ability to prevent fraudulent groups from calling themselves churches to avoid taxation, etc. The use of such vehicles by Providence Presbyterian Church is not meant to imply that we are agreeing to the idea that the church exists as a creation of or an entity of the state; nor is it meant to imply that the civil government has the authority to tax the church, or to regulate its doctrine or Biblically-based practice. Rather, we hold that each is an entity which as to its existence and operation answers directly to God and not to the other.⁷

Incorporation As a Legitimate Vehicle

It should be again noted that Providence Presbyterian Church is not a 501 (c) (3) corporation. Some have said that this by-law is an example of being naive. Those who make this charge have still not articulated a mechanism by which civil and church governments can, in a practical way, relate to each other. Is there a relationship between church and state? If so, how does this take place? How would the state know of the existence of the church? Incorporation as stated above is a vehicle. The church is more than a particular tool or vehicle. Is incorporation something inherently sinful? Most of us work for companies

that are incorporated. If incorporation is inherently sinful, should we quit our jobs? It is true that by definition a corporation is a creation of the state. Is your company a creation of the state? Those who argue that a church must not incorporate should ask their place of employment to disincorporate. Especially family business corporations. Consistency demands it. Would your family be a creation of the state if it made use of a corporation? It is fallacious to assert that the use of a legal tool such as a corporate structure turns a family or church into a creation of the state. The family and church are more than the corporate entity. It has been argued by R. J. Rushdoony that the doctrine of incorporation is one of history's most important doctrines. Rushdoony has this to say concerning corporations:

The church thus, as the original and true corporation has an earthly as well as a supernatural life....

The influence of the concept or doctrine of incorporation or the corporation went beyond the state into the world of commerce. The business corporation echoes whether or not it knows it, the Biblical doctrine of the church. Two things may be said at this point. First, it goes without question that the doctrine of the corporation has, in humanistic hands, been greatly abused and misused. However this should not lead us into overlooking a second fact, namely, that the concept of the corporation has given continuity to man's activities in one sphere after another. Medieval and modern institutions have a continuity and history unlike anything in the non-Christian world. What the corporation doctrine has enabled men to do is to transcend the limitations of their life-time and life-span. Men can create and develop a business, a school, or an agency whose function lives beyond themselves. This has been a very revolutionary and Biblical fact....

Granted that corporations are not necessarily good (nor necessarily bad), it still remains true that the concept of the corporation has been important in history by giving continuity to the works of men. Among other things, the original corporation, the church, has given a new meaning to time. Time is now time in terms of Christ, B.C. Before Christ, or A.D., Anno Domini, the year of our Lord, in Christ....

The development of corporations in Western history has been very important. Many Christian corporations were established during the medieval era to carry on specific Biblical duties and to organize people for common action to meet a specific Christian need or function. Attempts at statist control were also common....

In the United States, virtually total freedom existed for generations for all kinds of corporations. The incorporation of a church or Christian agency of any kind was simply a legal formality notifying the state of the existence of such a body and its immunity from statist controls. In recent years, the statist have turned that notification into a form of licensure and control. The matter can be compared to filing a birth certificate. When the birth of Sarah Jones is recorded by her parents and doctor, permission for Sarah Jones to exist is definitely not requested; rather, a fact is legally recorded. Similarly, in American law religious trusts, foundations, or trusts did not apply for the right to exist but recorded their certificate of birth, their incorporation. The current Internal Revenue Service doctrine is that the filing is a petition for the right to exist. This turns the historic position, and the First Amendment, upside down. It asserts for the federal government the "right" to establish religion and to control the exercise thereof. As a result, a major conflict of church and state is under way. At the

same time, many abuses of the concept of a church corporation prevail. Some organizations sell "ordinations" as pastors and priests to enable men in the evasion of income taxes. This kind of abuse does not invalidate the integrity of a true church, nor is it a legitimate reason for the entrance of the state into the life of valid churches. Then too, because of the intrusion of the federal and state governments into the sphere of church incorporation, some are advocating disincorporation by churches. Given the vulnerability of the church as an incorporated legal entity to statist controls, we should not forget the total vulnerability with disincorporation. In some court cases the results are proving to be especially disastrous. If our weapons against an enemy prove to be somewhat defective, does it make sense to throw away those weapons and to disarm ourselves?⁸

It should be noted that Rushdoony is one of the more influential Reformed theologians of the twentieth century. Incorporation is the product of a Christian world view. Asian, African, and Arab world views did not produce the doctrine of incorporation. These world views hold to a different teleology (view of history). Disincorporation is a short-term solution. The Branch Davidian sect was an unincorporated religious association. This did not stop the tanks. The removal or absence of the legal barrier, *i.e.*, the corporate shield or veil, may have made the membership of the Davidian sect to a much greater degree vulnerable to the government attack. It is a fact that the corporate shield protects the membership from actions against the corporation. Should we throw out the baby with the bath water? We should not repudiate the products of Christian civilization just because the state is intruding into these areas. Our strategy should be to reclaim and rebuild, not repudiate. Let us elect better representatives who will reign in government abuses.

¹ Messrs. Ron Porter, Steven Schlei, Norman Jones, David Maser, Richard Honaker, "Introduction to the Concept, Attributes, and Definition of the Corporation, Part One and Two," *The Bias Report*, Editor Larry Woiwode (Carson, Stephen Sturlaugson, 1993), February, 4-18, March, 6-15.

² Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures On Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1981), 79.

³ G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession Of Faith* (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964), 250.

⁴ Williamson, 250, 251.

⁵ W. Fred Graham, *Church and Society. Readings in Calvin's Theology*, Ed. Donald K. McKim, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1984), 277.

⁶ D. G. Hart and John Muether, *Fighting The Good Fight*, (Philadelphia, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1995), 184, 185.

⁷ By-Laws of Providence Presbyterian Church, Denver, February 8, 1996, 2.

⁸ R. J. Rushdoony, "Incorporation" (Vallecito, Chalcedon, 1984), Position paper 50.

Mr. Kettler is a Ruling Elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and Chairman of the Waco Committee with Citizens for the Constitution. Mr. Kettler is also vice-chairman of Leaders for Liberty and a member of the John Birch Society.

The Carpocratians

By R. J. Rushdoony

Many times in recent years my mind has turned to Carpocrates and the Carpocratians as one movement or person after another has reminded me of them — Carpocrates lived under the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 AD). He was a Gnostic philosopher who was determined to present Jesus as a respectable and intelligent Gnostic thinker. Jesus for Carpocrates was not of virgin birth but was a man of a pure soul who ascended to a high spiritual plane, as might we all. Jesus was for him a religious genius. Hating the Jews, Carpocrates had his Jesus hating them also and rising above their "superstitions." The Carpocratians had statues of Jesus, Pythagorus, Plato, Aristotle, and others in their shrines. Every human soul could rise to the level of Jesus and surpass Him. The Old Testament and its law was rejected by Carpocrates and his followers, and also by a great many other heretical and pagan cults. They were much given to the use of pictures or icons. What Carpocrates and the Carpocratians represented was an attempt to accommodate Jesus Christ to contemporary culture. This meant re-shaping Jesus to Gnosticism and Greco-Roman culture. An acceptable and "historical" Jesus was thus created, "historical" in that Jesus was remade to fit into the then-modern world and life view. The result was a Gnostic Greco-Roman Jesus whose relevance ended as that culture collapsed. It was a silly and a futile effort, but it is the kind of re-shaping of Jesus which still marks our culture. Jesus is re-made to suit the cultural standards and icons of the day, and for this reason all these versions, from that of Carpocrates to the present, create only a fictitious Jesus for a foolish people. I regularly read of or hear about someone's "revision" of the Biblical Faith to make it suitable for contemporary men. The Carpocratians are all around us, and no less confident that their version gives us the truth about the Jesus of history! No doubt, wisdom was born with them and will die with them. The world and history are continually reconstructed to match men's hopes and beliefs. It's amazing to me how many people who profess to believe only that which is scientifically proven are ready to assert as fact that life exists somewhere on other planets, and that it must exist! Why? Their "reasons" are at base religious assertions that are implicitly hostile to the Biblical Faith. Implicit too is the belief that contemporary learning has reached the paradigm of truth, that we have now transcended religion and myth to attain the final paradigm. The son of Carpocrates, Epiphanes, who died at the age of 17, wrote a book on Justice, which he defined as equality. This for him meant a community of goods, and even of women. (One wonders how much he contributed to the very evil fifth-century Mazdakite communist movement.) After his death, Epiphanes was worshipped by some. His idea of equality as justice is still with us, and as deadly as ever. Equality is not justice and has never been so. It is rather a leveling that denies justice in favor of equalizing everything, including good and evil. Clearly, from the early years of the second century to the

present, we have not learned much. We have Carpcratsians all around us as arrogant and as destructive as ever. The answer to the Carpcratsians is the unequivocal allegiance to and faith in the whole word of God and the Christ set forth therein. A people whose "faith" is limited to a ticket to heaven rather than serving the triune God with all our heart, mind and being can do little to counteract our present-day Carpcratsians. Only as we serve him, rather than expecting him to serve us, can we be effective servants of Christ and his Kingdom. There are too many Carpcratsians all around us, and they are, whether they like it or not, implicitly enemies of Christ and his Kingdom (*Mt. 6:33*).

Random Notes, 70

By R. J. Rushdoony

1. Much has been said and written about the loss of civility in recent decades, but it has not altered the situation. Prior to World War II, there was no lack of strong dissent and debate, but with it some decency prevailed. When then famous columnist Westbrook Pegler overstepped the bounds, he soon lost his audience.

In those years, it was commonplace for me to share a meal with friends who were Marxists and argue extensively without nastiness or loss of respect for one another. We did not see one another as evil, only mistaken. Now all who disagree with the Left or Right are all part of an evil conspiracy, it seems.

Why is this so? I believe that the origins of this attitude go back to the early years of Unitarianism and Transcendentalism, and, though them, to Hegel. The Christian belief in the harmony of interests (because of God's overriding Providence) had given way to the conflict of interests. As a result, instead of solutions to slavery, these people worked for conflict with the South. Prior to this time, much of the North, being more prosperous, had a higher percentage of slaves, as Shane White showed in *Somewhat More Independent, The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770-1810* (1991). But the new ideology of conflict was then absent. As Otto Scott has often pointed out, many countries had more slaves than did the U. S., but only the U. S. went to war over the matter because too many in the North and South wanted conflict.

Since then, we have been a conflict society. Insults and attacks are the "solution." But they only intensify the problem. No man has ever changed his views, I often tell people, by having someone spit in his face. Disagreement, yes, but not offensiveness and conflict.

2. The Poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744) is not as well known now as he once was, although he is still recognized as one of England's greatest poets. In "An Essay on Man" (1733), Pope cited charity as basic to man's life: "But all mankind's concern is charity: All must be false that thwart this one great

end." Pope went on to praise some of the benevolent noblemen of his day, and to cite their charities. A generation later, Oliver Goldsmith also honored charitable men, as did William Cowper (1731-1800), and others.

3. The world seems to be determined to go mad. Here in California, we have another environmental problem. "The Delhi sands flower-loving fly" has been placed on the endangered species list by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. And here we foolish Californians thought it was an annoying fly to be slapped out of existence! But some cities in Southern California are in trouble because costly studies of this fly's needs are at the least postponing developments for two years. Fontana may be forced into defaulting on bond payments. The case is now before a judge. Of course, we all know that judges are experts on flies.

4. I commented recently on the lack of morality in the business and corporate world. *World* magazine, September 14, 1996, p. 12 ff., has an account of how a major corporation is providing Red China with a technology with a single purpose, to locate women who want more than one child, to find home churches, and priests performing mass. The excuse is that they are not responsible for the use made of their technology.

Meanwhile, here in the States, corporations often require staff, salesmen, etc. to attend weekly seminars to promote better management and sales. Those attending are told to shed "negative" thinking such as marked Jesus, "a loser."

All hell would break loose if any company held even a voluntary program of Christian Bible study and fellowship.

5. Peter Hammond, in *Faith Under Fire in the Sudan*, reports not only on the persecution and enslavement of Christian women and children (black) but on the crucifixions of Christian men (black) by the Islamic Arabs of the North. But the media will not carry this story.

6. Some have documented the prevalence of Gnostic thinking in our present culture, most notably Peter Jones in *The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back* (1992). (He has a second and larger study of current Gnosticism in the press.) There is a revealing comment by a scholar, not a Christian, Ioan P. Couliano, *The Tree of Gnosis, Gnostic Mythology from Early Christianity to Modern Nihilism* (1990). He writes on "the resemblance between Gnostic myth and the myth of Neo-Darwinian biology as emphasized by Hans Jonas" (p. 262). It is time someone developed this fact fully.

Conliano ties the Paulicean sect of the seventh century to Marcionism and cites their alliance with the Moslems (p. 38f).

7. One of the major events of the twentieth century was the amazing rise and fall of Margaret Thatcher. She had revived English prosperity and made Britain again a world power. Her own party ousted her, a startling fact, to resume Britain's decline. Some day we may know more about this era in history.

8. I like the statement by E. Calvin Beisner in *God in Three Persons* (1984) that the Nicene Creed "is an exercise in systematic theology" (p. 145). Churches that use the Creed in worship are thereby teaching their people basic theology.

9. Enough for now. Don't step on any sand flies or maybe some federal officer will come after you! Abort as many babies as you want, but steer clear of the sand flies!

Letters to the Editor

Dear Dr. McIntyre:

Now, that was not even nice let alone Christian.
“. . . Presbyterians are Baptist [sic] who can read. . .”

You need to read 1 John 3.

I am grateful that this Baptist who has worshipped with a PCA church and enjoyed fellowship of a neighbor who is a ruling elder has not found the disdain, vindictiveness, hostility, contempt and prejudice against Baptist [sic] that appears frequently in “Chalcedon.”

[name withheld]

Your letter complaining about my article, “How to Train Your Child to be Fully Literate,” was an answer to prayer. It’s not for the reason you hoped, however, but because you illustrate exactly what a semi-literate person is. Congratulations! You accuse me of not being “nice” and being not “Christian.” You prescribe 1 John 3 to correct my “disdain, vindictiveness, hostility, contempt, and prejudice” toward Baptists.

1 John 3, 4, and 5 is our Lord’s warning and instructions on how to “try the spirits” or recognize false prophets. The test is the love of God. I suppose you wish to say that I fail that test, because I do not love Baptists as I should. This love, unfortunately for you, doctor, is defined in 1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.” To put it in my own words, love is an emotion that causes one to obey God’s law-word and find that compulsion a joy instead of an imposition. A false prophet, on the other hand, will define love as emotion that compels one to wink at sin and excuse sin in the name of brotherhood and find anyone like me who tries to use the Scripture correctly “unloving” or “judgmental” or any of the names you have called me and my colleagues at Chalcedon in your letter.

As matter of fact, I could call you a false prophet, but my heart is too full of love to do that. I’ll settle for “not fully literate.” I am going to send your letter to my associates at Chalcedon. I hope they will publish your letter and my response.

I know, doctor, that most people will agree with you and that your position is popular and in the majority, even in the PCA, as you boast. But, sir, as I wrote last month, “They are captive to what other people say and think. Not only are they politically correct, they are political prisoners, never able to fully function as literate persons. My prayers and love go out to you and all semi-literate Christians.” God bless you.

*Ellsworth E. McIntyre
Naples, Florida*

I am a long-time financial supporter of Chalcedon.

I could not disagree more with the pro-free trade position of Mr. Brandy as expounded in his letter to the editor in the *Chalcedon Report* for May 1997. I was also very disappointed that there was no editorial rebuttal to the arguments made by Mr. Brandy. I remember an Easy Chair tape of several years ago in which Otto Scott effectively attacked the free trade position. I am sure Mr. Scott could answer Mr. Brandy much better than I can, but not knowing if Mr. Scott will write in response to Mr. Brandy’s letter, I will give it my best shot.

This country’s economic philosophy (after independence) was developed by Alexander Hamilton in his *Report on Manufactures*. That philosophy has been described as protectionist since it employed as its key feature a protective tariff. However, it was more than this, since

it encompassed an entire system and approach to the economic sphere, whereby a nation could achieve prosperity through the free, enterprising work of its people. Central to this philosophy was the idea that there existed an inherent harmony of interests between capital and labor that must be recognized and honored by the nation’s people and its economic and political institutions. Inseparable from this idea was the concept of nation and people bound together, one to another, in true community. The Christian influence was (and is) obvious and unmistakable.

The above philosophy became popularly known through the works of the 19th century economists, Matthew Carey, Henry Carey, and Frederick List. (Lincoln was one of its many proponents and the South was full of its opponents; however, the South should have built its own industry—but that is another story.) It was List who wrote (if I may paraphrase my recollection of the quote) “What good does it do if I buy a cheaper shirt and lose my arm?”

In any case, the protective tariff and the American System of Economics, as established by Hamilton and expounded upon by the Careys and List, continued until this century and resulted in the unprecedented and astounding success of American industry. The American System was basically copied by Japan after Commodore Perry’s visit and was simply refined after World War II. (People forget that the Japanese miracle began in the 1850s—culminating in its defeat of Russia in the first decade of the 1900s.) The question arises—Is it only coincidental that as our commitment to protecting our industry steadily declined after World War II, our industry did likewise, while that of the Japanese advanced?

Ultimately, with free trade every man will work for the wages of the Chinese and enjoy the same Orwellian freedom. The free traders ignore the reality that without economic borders, there will be no national or political borders. Free trade is a weapon of the One Worlders. The Common Market was intended to lead to the European Union, and NAFTA and GATT are intended to lead to World Government through regional stepping stones. These arrangements have been sold (and will continue to be sold) under the banner of free trade.

The notion seemingly held by Mr. Brandy that some sort of free trade utopia exists in which all men benefit is nothing more than an ethereal delusion. Free trade is socialistic just as Orwellian freedom is slavery.

Mr. Brandy’s contention that “The Bible does [not] give the state any power to restrict private contracts between citizens of different countries” is simply wrong. So is his following statement that there is a (Biblical?) “requirement that there be no trade barriers.” Private contract is not sacred and there are literally thousands of examples of private contractual agreements that are and should be “restricted” by the state.

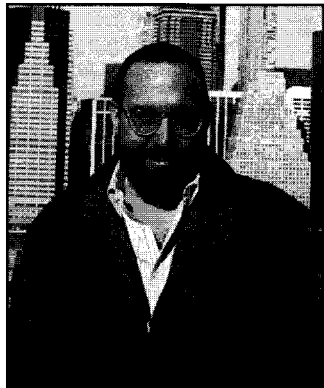
I find it extremely ironic that Mr. Brandy fears a government willing to “set the terms of trade” because—“what prevents that government from imposing massive taxes on us, regulating every aspect of our lives, forcing our children to attend state-run schools, redistributing wealth, and meddling in the affairs of countries around the world?” The things he lists are here already—products of a government that sets the terms of trade by the standard of Mr. Brandy’s own hallowed idol—free trade!

Mr. Brandy has been brainwashed by his state-run university to embrace a philosophy that is incompatible with the Christian world view he believes he holds. Fortunately, there is still hope. Mr. Brandy will graduate with his Ph. D. in Economics, find unemployment in the coming New World Order, and discover the beginning of his real education.

*Joseph L. Williams
Tallahassee, Florida*

Seder and Supper

By Steve M. Schlissel



Each year, as I watch my unbelieving Jewish family celebrate the Passover on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Nisan, my Christian heart cries out, "They know not what they do!" As a Jew, I sometimes watch my Christian brethren celebrate the Lord's Supper and wonder if the same sentiment may not be expressed for them.

For while the Jews leave the Seder table without apprehending the spiritual reality of the meal, too many Christians, for lack of understanding its various contexts, leave the Supper without grasping the realities it was meant to convey. Not a few sense that they are missing something. Perhaps they are right. As one woman remarked, "I don't know how I'm supposed to feel—somehow we are not given the proper clues." Seeing the Supper as the fulfillment of the Passover may provide us with some "clues."

Until the fourth century, it was not uncommon for Christians to celebrate a special Lord's Supper at the time of the Jewish Passover. However, in 325 A.D., the church council of Nicea issued a letter to the churches of Asia calling it "a thing unworthy and unbecoming, that, in the celebration of that most holy solemnity, we should follow the usage of the Jews . . . who are deservedly given up to blindness of mind. Let nothing, therefore, be common to us with that most hostile multitude of the Jews." Since then, the vivid connection between the Passover and the "holy solemnity" has been largely lost to the church. The translators of the King James Version even rendered the word "Passover" in Acts 12:4 as "Easter" (this has been corrected in modern translations). Christians who have self-consciously celebrated the Supper as the fulfillment of the Passover have been too few. Our worship has become, if you'll permit me, "Gentilized." It has been abstracted from its roots, and this despite the fact that each Gospel account emphasizes the fact that the Supper was instituted by our Lord at a Seder meal. Though the Jewish observance of the Passover has evolved somewhat over the past 2,000 years, the essential elements remain as they were when Christ celebrated it in the Upper Room.

The historical context of Passover is the redemption of God's chosen people from their bitter bondage in Egypt. (The required eating of bitter herbs at the Seder is to remind us of this.) God sent the angel of death throughout the land slaying all the firstborn of his enemies. The blood of a lamb without blemish applied to the door of each Israelite household was the token given by God to assure his people that his wrath would

not come upon them. "When I see the blood I will pass over you." When the horrible judgment of God fell, his people were more than safe—they were free! The Passover was thus the most important covenant celebration of Israel. Major covenant renewals were celebrated during this feast under Solomon, Hezekiah, Josiah and Ezra. In fact, God chose to identify himself throughout the Old Testament in terms of this holy day: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Passover must also be understood in the context of the three major feasts which God commanded Israel to observe. Passover looks forward to Shavuot (literally, "Weeks", aka Pentecost), which the Jews commemorate as the occasion of the giving of the Law. The connection between the two is reinforced by Jews when they observe a special counting ceremony each day, until Passover merges into Pentecost. The Law given at Pentecost was itself a means to an end, seen in the third feast, Tabernacles. Tabernacles is a picture of the humble dominion the people of God have been promised if they love and obey God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. Thus Passover commemorates our liberation from slavery to Pharaoh that we might be servants of God and take possession of the land. The New Testament fulfillments are obvious: Through Christ, the Passover Lamb, we have been set free from bondage to sin, in order that, by the Spirit (Pentecost) the righteous requirements of the Law might be fully met in us (*Rom. 8:4*), in order that we might be made heirs of the world through powerful effects of the gospel (*Rom. 4:13*). We would profit from seeing the Supper as the celebration of freedom leading to service (*1 Pt. 2:16*) which in turn leads to godly dominion.

Our Lord's Supper celebrations are virtually devoid of this family-centeredness. We almost go out of our way to exclude children!

Passover's immediate connection is to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Jews prepare for the Passover by making a thorough search for leaven, purging their homes of all visible traces. On the morning before the Seder meal, orthodox Jewish neighborhoods are dotted by little bonfires into which the fathers have ceremonially cast the last known bits of leaven. We also are commanded to "get rid of the old yeast that [we] may be a new batch without yeast [sin]. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed." The search for leaven is the background of our practice of self-examination before the Supper. But we must remember that also after the Supper, we are to keep the feast with unleavened bread, that is, the bread of sincerity and truth (*1 Cor. 5:6-8*).

As the covenant meal *par excellence*, the Passover celebration

is very much family-oriented. It is the Jewish equivalent of Thanksgiving and Christmas combined. Scattered families aim to be together at this time. One rabbi has noted that the Seder is actually a family forum for retelling the redemption story. He cites Exodus 13, where we are commanded to use the ceremony as an opportunity for instruction. The entire Seder is deliberately organized to heighten the interest and inquisitiveness of the covenant youth. Our Lord's Supper celebrations are virtually devoid of this family-centeredness. We almost go out of our way to exclude children! If the Supper is a mystery to the participants, it must be altogether baffling to our children.

The Lord's Supper witnesses to the fact that Christians belong to a special family which includes the Father and the Son. The apostles left all to become members of Christ's family at the Last Supper. We practice infant baptism because Christ's family includes our children. We would do well to meaningfully include children in our celebration. An inability to explain the Supper to children may suggest that we don't understand it ourselves. The only information we have about Jesus' boyhood is that he went up to Jerusalem with his parents to celebrate Passover when he was twelve. It is significant that the Messiah while still a child was found at Passover "in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (*Lk. 2:49*). Perhaps we ought to have a child come to the table before the distribution of the elements and ask the server, "What do you mean by this?" He would then have opportunity to instruct the covenant youth as we are taught to in the Torah (Law): "This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt (*Ex. 13:8*)." (Some Jews recite the covenant history from Abraham's father, Terah, to the present!) Jesus, the true Passover Lamb, was certainly setting forth the Lord's Supper as the fulfillment of the Passover when he said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." What an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel to our children! Let's tell them, "We do this in remembrance of Christ who delivered us from our bitter bondage to sin."

The rabbis emphasize the deliberate use of "me" in Exodus 13:8. The Passover liturgy notes, "In each generation a person must feel as if he himself just came out of Egypt." We, too, are to regard Christ's sacrifice personally, for me, for us, even in this generation. We must apply the blood of the Lamb to the doorposts of our hearts by faith. This is the essential reason for the memorial meal—a God-given means by which we personally appropriate and celebrate the redemption of God's people from bondage, and by which God seals us as his own. But the Seder avoids mystical speculation. The personal application is to be made in the context of the covenant community. "We, who are many, are one body" (*1 Cor. 10:17*).

In addition to the look back and the look within, each Seder includes a look ahead. The entire company says in unison, "Next year in Jerusalem," that is, may the next Passover be finally fulfilled in the Messianic Kingdom. Could Jesus have had this in mind when he said at the Last Supper that the next time he would eat the Passover it would be when it found its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God? Certainly Paul bids us to look forward when he says that by the Supper, we "proclaim the Lord's death

until He comes." The rabbis command that the Seder be performed with joy. Every Lord's Supper must also be celebrated with joy. Think of what it commemorates. Think of what it anticipates!

A big difference between the Seder and the Supper is that the Seder has an actual supper and our Supper doesn't! One prominent Jewish missionary tells the story of how, after his conversion, he was invited to have the Lord's Supper at a local church. When he was handed a tiny bit of bread and a thimble-sized cup, he was amazed. "This is a supper? And they call Jews cheap!" While you might have to be Jewish to appreciate his humor, you don't have to be Jewish to appreciate the point. We have not done well to so thoroughly abstract the bread and wine from an actual meal. In Jewish homes today, the elements which correspond to the Supper of the Lord, the bread and the cup which were sanctified by our Messiah, these same elements form the climax of the Seder meal. In fact, the bread, which had been specially set aside, is brought forth after the meal at the third cup of wine (the Seder calls for four) which is still known as "the cup of blessing" (*See 1 Cor. 10:16*). As I watch my father break the matzoh and distribute it to all the celebrants, I silently cry out with the Apostle, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved!"

While the Jews have the meal yet miss the full truth of the elements, we retain the elements but have done away with the meal. Yet, throughout Scripture, the entire drama of redemption climaxes again and again in redeemed man's eating and drinking with God. In Exodus 24, the closing section of what is known as the "Book of the Covenant," we read of Moses and seventy-three other representatives of Israel: "They saw God, and they ate and drank." In the appointed offerings, the sin offering was followed by the burnt offering, but the goal was the "shalom" offering. This peace (or, fellowship) offering signified and sealed the full covenant restoration of the worshiper and was completed in a meal. Consider also the many meals Christ ate with his disciples in his post-resurrection appearances (*Lk. 24:30-43; Jn. 21:1-14; Ac. 1:4 and 10:41*). Similarly, the fellowship meal preceding the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup formed a part of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. Might we not do well to occasionally unite the elements of the Supper with a festive but orderly meal? How about each fourteenth of Nisan?

The next time we celebrate the Supper, let's not restrict our examination to self. Let us consider the contexts which help us to see this bread and wine as the richest possible fare. Take. Eat. Take. Drink. Christ has set us free.

Steve Schlissel has been pastor of Messiah's Congregation in Brooklyn, NY since 1979. He serves as the Overseer of Urban Nations (a mission to the world in a single city), and is the Director of Meantime Ministries (an outreach to women who were sexually abused as children). Steve lives with his wife of 23 years, Jeanne, and their five children.

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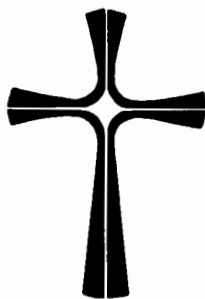
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