

ATTACHMENTS – ARPTalk(3)

Attachment 1

Henry Lewis Smith – A Report on the PCA General Assembly

The 36th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America met June 10-13, 2008 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dallas, TX with approximately twelve hundred commissioners present. In even numbered years, teaching elders (ministers) fill the moderator's chair, and this year three were nominated: Thomas Kay, Jr., Aliceville, AL pastor; Palmer Robertson, missionary teacher-administrator with the African Bible College; and Paul Kooistra, coordinator of Mission to the World. TE Kooistra was elected in the first ballot.

An irenic spirit of tranquility pervaded the assembly; there were no white hot issues this year. Four overtures from regional presbyteries dealt with the role of women in the church. These overtures were referred to the Committee of Overtures, a megacommittee composed of a ruling elder and a teaching elder from each of the sixty-seven presbyteries. This committee recommended answering in the negative an overture from Philadelphia Presbytery requesting the appointment of a study committee "to study Scripture teaching bearing on women's eligibility for election and ordination to the office of deacon." A minority report, championed by Covenant Seminary's president Bryan Chappel and Phil Ryken, pastor of the influential Tenth Church, Philadelphia (and a 2008 speaker at Bonclarken), recommended the creation of this study committee. After extended discussion, in spite of truly eloquent appeals by these two "heavy hitters," the committee's majority recommendation not to create a study committee prevailed on a voice vote.

In what was considered the only other controversial issue, the General Assembly directed its Committee on Cooperative Ministries "to review the effectiveness of Ridge Haven," the denominational retreat center at Brevard, N.C. There has been concern expressed over the internal operations of this institution. A report is expected at next year's assembly in Orlando.

In other reports the Assembly learned that eighteen new churches had been added in 2007, one by transfer and seventeen new church plants. Mission to the World reports 594 full-time and long-term missionaries in 60-65 countries, and 6,484 short term missionaries. Interest always runs high in the work of Reformed University Ministries, now maintaining ministries on 117 college campuses in 32 states, with ministries also at the National University in Mexico City and at the ancient University of Lima, Peru. In its thirty-six year history the PCA has been instrumental in establishing evangelical Reformed denominations in four European countries: England, Portugal, Sweden and Ukraine, plus the L'Eglise

Reformee Du Quebec, as well as sending pastors to assist in renewal in congregation of the Free Church of Scotland—AT THE REQUEST OF THESE CONGREGATIONS. There are now thirty-five African-American pastors in the PCA. Total membership in the PCA is 342,041, an increase of 2% over the previous year. Total per capita giving was \$2517.

Henry Lewis Smith

Attachment 2

Bryan Crotts – First Presbytery Charlotte Area Pastors’ Lunch Report – July 7, 2008

- **The Presbytery lunch meets 6 times per year at the Huntersville Church**
- **Huntersville is accessible to the greater region – Charlotte, Concord, Gastonia and Statesville areas**
- **The purpose of the lunch is to promote fellowship, encouragement and to discuss issues relevant to church and presbytery life**
- **The lunch is open to all ministers in the Presbytery, though geography binds us to primarily the Charlotte area**
- **Invitation is via email to all ministers with personal email addresses listed in the latest copy of General Synod minutes, through email updates from *The ARP* magazine and general word of mouth**
- **Various topics have been discussed in the last two years of this lunch ministry:**
 - **The Pastor & Prayer**
 - **How Our Preaching Has Changed During Our Ministry**
 - **Pastoring Your Family**
 - **Marriage & Ministry**
 - **Longevity in Ministry**
 - **Loving Your Flock**
 - **Resources for Biblical Pastoral Ministry**
- **Speakers or discussion facilitators are one of our own who has a burden to discuss a relevant topic**
- **Each July we have held roundtable discussions concerning the previous month’s Presbytery & Synod events**
- **In July 2007 the discussion was centered around the *Report of the Vision Committee***
- **In July 2008 our focus was on both Presbytery & Synod concerns**
- **Some of our discussion led to the following areas of concern:**
 - **Pragmatism – Important business is often pushed to the end of the day or week as we spend so much time “promoting” good things (speakers, events, guests, etc.), but at the expense of doing our business well. Many watch the clock during meetings and much business is “ram rod” through**

without careful deliberation. The Presbytery is weakened by the end of the day due to Presbyters leaving while important business is on the table. Often the question is called on an important matter and many are not ready to vote. It was said that many ruling elders end up “bumfuzzled” and are forced to make an ill-informed vote. That is to say, they don’t understand why all the fuss over an issue or are confused over terminology, etc.

- **Division:** It was discussed that in a deliberative body, some will choose different sides of an issue. Issues of debate will certainly stir the emotions. There seems to be a problem of polarization within our court. It was noted that one would not want the extremes of shallow consensus or the taking up of weapons against brothers with differing views. Consensus was that we need to reach out to our brothers with differing views, yet remain principled in our own decisions.
- **Disorder:** The moderator of Presbytery noted that the summer meeting was characterized by much speaking out of order. He recognized his part in allowing it to take place. Discussion was held concerning the need to show up to meetings on time, prepared to spend appropriate time on issues, dress for the occasion, and to show proper protocol (standing, being recognized, and stating name & church). It was also noted that the issues should be debated while addressing the moderator, not a fellow member of the court. Importantly, it was noted that good committee leadership might prove whether or not we can expediently handle matters (proper reports sent on time, clear information, right processes followed, etc.). It seems we spend much time helping committees follow proper procedure. Two ad hoc committees will likely help us better solve these problems.
- **The Presbytery as the Main Court:** It seems to many that the end result desired is driving business, not our polity. Language from churches calling a minister or from an agency or committee forces the Presbytery to deal with matters that don’t fit within our Manual of Procedure. It was noted that those calling a minister need to “dance to the tune” of the Presbytery, not we to their tune.
- **Devolution of Power:** Noted was the lack of checks and balances as too much authority lies within the power of too few
- **Amount of Business:** The need for four stated meetings with appropriate committee deadlines was discussed. Stated

meetings don't get moving until after lunch, summer meeting is too short, and called meetings are called too quickly to inform Presbyters of important issues to be acted upon.

- **Erskine College & Seminary: Discussion was held concerning the apparent theological divide within the Presbytery. Some are concerned with issues of neo-Orthodoxy, matters of the view of the Bible, etc. while others are not. The divide in both Presbytery and Synod concerning the view of the Bible was of significant concern in our discussion.**
- **Our plans for the September 10th lunch are to discuss the issue of inerrant and infallible**

Bryan Crotts

Attachment 3

William Evans - Some Reflections by a Christian College Professor

Taken from *Reformation 21*

<http://www.reformation21.org/featured/some-reflections-by-a-christian-college-professor.php>

In my recent travels and conversations, the topics of Dr. Peter Enns' book and the author's relationship with Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia have come up repeatedly. Dr. Enns is the author of *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Baker, 2005), a volume that has provoked much discussion in Reformed and Evangelical circles. He is also a tenured professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary.

In brief, Enns contends that the phenomena of Scripture pose real problems for the traditional evangelical understanding of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. For example, he notes the way that the book of Genesis presupposes an ancient understanding of the structure of the cosmos, and suggests that Genesis contains mythic elements that are also reflected in ancient Near Eastern documents such as Enuma Elish. He implicitly argues that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch because the "linguistic evidence" does not support such a claim (pp. 51-52). He maintains that the Old Testament contains a good deal of "theological diversity" in which different and even conflicting things are taught in different places (pp. 71-112). Finally, he contends that the New Testament writers' use of the Old Testament is consistent with the hermeneutical approaches prevalent in Second Temple Judaism, and that these New Testament writers persistently engage in "eisegesis" rather than the exegesis of Old Testament texts (pp. 113-165). That is to say, they

"read into" Old Testament texts distinctively Christian meanings that could not have been intended by the original authors.

Because of these "problems" and "messiness," Enns contends that we must adopt an "incarnational" understanding of Scripture, and that such an approach will enable us to do justice to the profoundly human character of the Bible. In other words, Enns suggests that just as Jesus Christ is fully divine and fully human, so also Scripture should be understood not only as the Word of God, but also as profoundly human in that the texts of Scripture must be understood in terms of the historical and cultural context in which they were written (pp. 17-21). Repeatedly he contends that God has chosen to "incarnate" his word in human thought and language, with the limitations and foibles that accompany genuine humanity. The failure by evangelicals to do justice to the Bible's humanity has led, Enns argues, to "scriptural docetism" (p. 18).

Reaction to the book has been mixed. Some have acclaimed it as "honest," "refreshing," "constructive," and so on (see the cover blurbs). Others have concluded that the views expressed in it are incompatible with a high view of Scripture and with Chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Here we will recall that all Westminster Seminary faculty members must subscribe ex animo to the Westminster Standards. Reports emanating from the Westminster campus suggest that the faculty itself is profoundly divided over the question of whether Enns' views fall within the bounds of confessional orthodoxy, and we recently learned that the Westminster Board of Trustees voted on March 26, 2008 to suspend Dr. Enns from his teaching position at the end of the spring semester. A recommendation regarding Enns' future at the seminary will be made to the Board by the Institutional Personnel Committee when the Board meets again in May of 2008.

Having already read some of Dr. Enns' shorter writings, and having attended a colloquium on Enns' book at the 2006 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, I recently finished reading *Inspiration and Incarnation*, and thought that I would share some thoughts about the volume. [1]

Some Words of Appreciation

On a positive note, I quickly sensed that Enns is a capable scholar--he has a command of the data pertaining to the ancient Near Eastern background of the Old Testament and to Second Temple Judaism. The book is also written in a reasonably clear and accessible way; in fact, it is intended for the non-specialist. His treatment of the hermeneutical context of the New Testament and its location in the world of Second Temple Judaism is, on the whole, provocative and insightful. There can be little doubt that the New Testament writers were working with a hermeneutic that differs in some important ways from the "grammatical-

historical" approach that is often taught in evangelical seminaries today. However we might wish to phrase it precisely, some sort of *sensus plenior* dimension is present in these texts. As I read him, Enns' stance on these issues is not far from that of some careful evangelical scholars in that he recognizes that the apostolic exegesis has implications for how we should handle the Old Testament, but he also recognizes that we cannot simply recapitulate the apostolic exegesis without remainder (pp. 156-160). Likewise, Enns' handling of the ANE context of the creation narrative in Genesis 1 should not surprise or shock anyone who is familiar with the work of "framework hypothesis" advocates such as the late Meredith Kline. Enns is also doubtless correct in saying that sometimes we sense problems in Scripture because we have imposed alien categories upon the text. Finally, Enns has a valid point in his contention that our doctrine of Scripture must take into account the phenomena of the text as well as the explicit claims of authority and inspiration. In this recognition he stands with B. B. Warfield, Robert Dick Wilson, and William Henry Green of Old Princeton. And so there are strikingly positive aspects that can and should be recognized about the book.

Seven Problems

That being said, there are, in my judgment, some persistent and even severe problems here as well. First, as the title itself indicates, the concept of "incarnation" plays a prominent role in the book, but the precise function of the concept is not clearly defined. Is it a metaphor, an "analogy" (p. 17), a model, a "parallel" (p. 168), or what? Enns sometimes acknowledges that the "parallel" has its limits, but he continues to trot it out as a solution to the "problems" of the text without really coming to grips with the limitations of the metaphor in this particular context. One senses that the "parallel" breaks down far quicker than Enns imagines. At very least, we would expect that Enns would recognize that Scripture is not an "incarnation" in the strict sense because the text of Scripture is, ontologically speaking, neither divine nor human. Rather, it is the product or result of both divine and human agency. But this question is never satisfactorily engaged.

Second, the incarnational parallel appears to function in a manner that contrasts rather sharply with much traditional use. With respect to the incarnation of Christ, it is often used to assert that Christ is sinless, perfect, world-ruling, and so forth while at the same time also genuinely human. When the incarnational analogy has been applied to Scripture in the past (as it sometimes has been by Reformed theologians) it generally is used to teach that Scripture is infallible/inerrant despite the fact that it was written by otherwise fallible human beings because it is also God's word. Sometimes the analogy is also used by Reformed theologians to account for the human character of Scripture, but I do not recall seeing an earlier instance where it has been utilized in quite this fashion to account for the alleged wholesale "messiness" of the Bible. While this in itself is

not a fatal objection--Enns, after all, could be right--it does pose a problem for any claim that he stands well within the tradition of Reformed discourse on this topic.[2] The limits of this line of thinking are further evident when we reverse the direction of the analogy: Given what Enns says about the "incarnation" of Scripture, what sort of Christology might this suggest? The answer seems to be some sort of kenotic or Ebionite Christology in which the human dimension largely trumps the divine, rather than the creedal Christology of Chalcedon.

Third, Enns seems overly preoccupied with what he deems the "problems" in Scripture, and he consistently rejects attempts at harmonization, even when harmonization is arguably the simplest and most reasonable solution (e.g., the Pentateuchal teaching on Hebrew slaves treated on pp. 90-91). But does not harmonization have its place? There are instances where Enns finds "problems" that do not exist--for example, he suggests that "Paul has Timothy, a Gentile, circumcised," despite what Paul says elsewhere about the circumcision of Gentiles (p. 95). But, in point of fact, as the son of a Jewish mother Timothy was a Jew. Similarly, Enns seems to reject any argument about the character of Scripture that is not substantiated by internal or external evidence, and deductions from the divine origin of Scripture are invariably rejected. Here Enns seems very much the child of the Enlightenment.

Fourth, as we would expect in light of the above, Enns at points concedes much, and in my judgment too much, to critical scholarship. For example, his views on the history of the Hebrew language, which are certainly debatable, lead to an implicit denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (pp. 51-52).[3] I fear that the incarnational analogy is simply a "fig leaf" for the acceptance of a range of post-Enlightenment critical conclusions regarding Scripture that heretofore have been deemed unacceptable in Evangelical circles.

Fifth, Enns' use of the category of "myth" may be questioned. Even if we grant that Genesis 1 and Enuma Elish assume basically the same cosmology (which seems to be the case[4]) there are still vast differences between these texts. When we read Enuma Elish and its story of Marduk and Tiamat we smile and rightly say, "That's ANE myth." When we read Genesis, we have interpretive question to be sure, but we also recognize that we are dealing with something very different in tone and content from Enuma Elish or Atrahasis. Given the bad odor of the term after D. F. Strauss and Bultmann, Enns' use of "myth" to describe some of the content of Genesis seems inappropriate.

Sixth, Enns' basic stance seems anti-doctrinal or at best indifferent to doctrine. Repeatedly we read about the "provisionality" of doctrine (see, e.g., pp. 49, 168-169). He suggests that our inescapable location within culture means that "our theologizing . . . will have a temporary and provisional--even fallen--dimension to it" (p. 169). Of course, there is some

truth to this contention. We do not know as God knows, and there are a host of limitations attending our finite knowledge even as it is founded upon divine revelation (this is the truth that Reformed orthodoxy sought to articulate with the distinction between archetypal and ectypal knowledge). But in Enns' hands this insight becomes a blunt instrument which undercuts any appeal to doctrine or system. Repeatedly we read that the Bible is not about "rules" but rather "trajectories" (pp. 85-97, 170), and the obvious question emerges: Where and upon what basis is one to stand? Even the casual student of church history will quickly realize that the doctrine of the incarnation, which Enns purports to trumpet, was in fact the occasion of great conflict in both the pre- and post-Chalcedonian periods. In contending for the truth of the incarnation Athanasius and Leo the Great believed that they were articulating vital Christological "doctrine" and not just fuzzy "trajectories." At the end of the day, I'm driven to the suspicion that, for Enns, the "incarnational analogy" and all this talk of "trajectories" are simply rhetorical justification for the post-modern rejection of system and coherence.

Finally, there may well be an incipiently Neo-orthodox impulse at work here. When we read between the lines, Enns seems to point beyond the "problems" and "messiness" of Scripture itself to the dynamic of God speaking and witnessing to Christ through Scripture (see pp. 110, 168-170). In this and in his emphasis upon the role of culture in theology (see p. 169) Enns is not far from the position currently articulated by John Franke of Biblical Theological Seminary, who has emerged as a spokesperson for postmodern evangelicalism and who is clearly indebted to Karl Barth in his view of Scripture. [5]

Further Comments

A host of questions emerge. For example, would I, as a professor at a Christian liberal arts college, use Inspiration and Incarnation as a textbook in one of my classes? As my students know all too well, I'm not opposed to the reading of liberal and critical voices. They know that in my classes they may well encounter Kant, Schleiermacher, Fosdick, Barth, Bultmann, Cone, and Ruether as well as Athanasius, Anselm, Calvin, Machen, and Grudem. But, having pondered the matter, I likely would not use this book in class, and for a number of reasons. One has to do with the message that is being sent. Here we have someone who claims, on some level, to be an evangelical and who teaches at one of the flagship institutions of American evangelicalism (and one that is known for its bedrock reliability on the doctrine of Scripture), but who is opening the door to highly problematic views of Scripture. Enns uses the language of "Christ-centered" evangelical piety to undermine the evangelical doctrine of Scripture, and I fear that this book will be a stepping stone for some to a neo-liberalism that breathes deeply of the post-modern air. Another has to do with the theological grid that is imposed on the biblical materials. While many of

the questions Enns asks are worthwhile, his use of the incarnational analogy ultimately creates more problems than it solves.

I also wonder how this story might have turned out differently. What if Dr. Enns had sought the counsel of his colleagues prior to publication? As a Westminster alumnus I'm reminded of the example set by the late Dr. Ray Dillard. When Prof. Dillard realized that his redactional reading of 2 Chronicles was "pushing the envelope," he engaged his faculty colleagues in dialogue and discussion. While not all agree with his conclusions, Dillard's commentary on 2 Chronicles stands as a monument of careful evangelical scholarship. Alas, that apparently did not happen in this instance, and the church is the poorer for it.

[1] This extended review was in large measure written prior to the release by Westminster Seminary in May 2008 of internal documents pertaining to the Enns controversy. Interested readers of this piece are encouraged to read through those documents:

(http://www.wts.edu/about/beliefs/statements/theological_discussion_documents.html),

(<http://www.wts.edu/uploads/images/files/Official%20Theological%20Documents%20for%20Web.pdf>).

[2] Enns did address this larger question at some length in his 2006 ETS paper presentation. The following quotations, from books that fell readily to hand in my office, illustrate this problem nicely. B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority* (P&R), pp. 162-163: "Even so distant an analogy may enable us, however, to recognize that as, in the case of Our Lord's person, the human nature remains truly human while yet it can never fall into sin or error because it can never act out of relation with the Divine nature into conjunction with which it has been brought; so in the case of the production of Scripture by the conjoint action of human and Divine factors, the human factors have acted as human factors, and have left their mark on the product as such, and yet cannot have fallen into that error which we say it is human to fall into, because they have not acted apart from the Divine factors, by themselves, but only under their unerring guidance."

W.G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, I: 102, writes: "The written Word is indeed Divine-human, like the incarnate Word. But the human element in Scripture, like the human nature in our Lord, is preserved from the defects of the common human, and becomes pure and ideal human. The human mind alone and by itself is fallible, but when inspired and moved by the Holy Spirit becomes infallible, because it is no longer alone and by itself. The written word, in this respect, is analogous to the incarnate Word. . . . Similarly, when the Holy Spirit inspires a human mind, though this human mind is not freed from all sin, because inspiration is not sanctification, yet it is freed from all error on the points involved. It is no longer the fallibly human, but is infallible upon all subjects respecting which it is inspired to teach."

Even Herman Bavinck, who emphatically does use the incarnational analogy to speak of Scripture as "humanly weak and despised and ignoble" and as taking "servant form," also says (*Reformed Dogmatics*, I: 435): "The recording of the word, of revelation, invites us to recognize that dimension of weakness and lowliness, the servant form, also in Scripture. But just as Christ's human nature, however weak and lowly, remained free from sin, so also Scripture is 'conceived without defect or stain'; totally human in all its parts but also divine in all its parts.

This incarnational analogy, as applied to Scripture, has an interesting history in Reformed circles. A survey of the index entries for "incarnation" in volume 2 of Richard Muller's *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* suggests that while early Reformed thinkers saw Christology and bibliology in close connection, they did not typically speak of inspiration and the nature of Scripture in "incarnational" terms. This situation apparently changes in nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the doctrine of Scripture, and especially the divine character of the Bible, became more controversial. In this context, as we see above, the incarnational analogy is used but generally to affirm the divine character and origin of Scripture. This use is then turned upside down by Karl Barth, who explicitly uses the incarnational analogy in such a way as to insist on the humanness and fallibility of Scripture. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/2:509-510: "There are obvious overlappings and contradictions--e.g., between the Law and the prophets, between John and the Synoptists, between Paul and James. But nowhere are we given a single rule by which to make a common order, perhaps an order of precedence, but at any rate a synthesis, of what is in itself such a varied whole. Nowhere do we find a rule which enables us to grasp it in such a way that we can make organic parts of the distinctions and evade the contradictions as such. We are led now one way, now another--each of the biblical writers obviously speaking only *quod potuit homo*--and in both ways, and whoever is the author, we are always confronted with the question of faith. . . . For within certain limits and therefore relatively they are all vulnerable and therefore capable of error even in respect of religion and theology. In view of the actual constitution of the Old and New Testaments this is something that we cannot possibly deny if we are not to take away their humanity, if we are not to be guilty of Docetism." On balance, it appears that Enns' use of the incarnational analogy is considerably closer to Barth than to Warfield, Shedd, and Bavinck.

[3] Enns was rightly challenged on this point by Richard E. Averbeck, "Compositional and Theological Implications for the Pentateuch from the Early History of the Hebrew Language," unpublished paper presented at the 2006 ETS Annual meeting.

[4] I treat this matter briefly in William B. Evans, "The NAPARC Community and the Peculiar Challenges of Our Time," *Presbyterion: Covenant Seminary Review* 27:1 (Spring 2001): 7-11.

[5] See John R. Franke, "God Hidden and Wholly Revealed: Karl Barth, Postmodernity and Evangelical Theology," *Books and Culture: A Christian Review* 9/5 (September/October 2003), pp. 16-17, 40-41). See also Franke's "Reforming Theology: Toward a Postmodern Reformed Dogmatics," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 1-26; and the highly critical responses by Westminster Seminary faculty to it in Carl R. Trueman, "It Ain't Necessarily So," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 311-325; and Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., "Response to John Franke," *Westminster Theological Journal* 65 (2003): 327-330.

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