

## COMMUNICATION

The most recent, most explosive development in the history of mankind is likely the phenomenon of the Internet. It is the latest aspect of computer technology that is having and will have a dramatic effect on how we communicate. As far back as the drum beat and smoke signals, through the written word via horseback, via telegram and snail mail (as the post office is now referred to), we have arrived at a method of communication whereby anyone who has access to a computer with a modem can send words and images around the globe in seconds.

Communication, as an industry, has grown astronomically in our life time, leading to a number of unsavory by-products. The speed of communication increases the stress in most of our lives. Changes in political or economic events on one side of the world have immediate and sometimes dramatic effects on the other side. The ability to transmit images instantaneously around the earth adds to the awareness of suffering in many places. The suspicion about media control of communication adds stress as we are not sure what or who to believe. Analysts communicate their twists to news stories and add to the confusion.

Besides the speed in communication there has also been great emphasis on the method of communication. Motivational speakers, books, and videos have multiplied in an effort to improve the way in which we communicate. Positive responses are considered much more likely if we communicate in the latest (proven) methods.

How do we, as God's people, deal with this phenomenon? Often it appears that because of our heritage (read: Dutch lineage) or our difficult characters, we are less able to communicate than we think we should. This becomes especially clear when we are asked about our faith life or asked to participate in mission work. Then many of us can be heard to say that we have not been blessed with a glib tongue or the ability to work with words.

Many years ago one of God's most famous servants also had an excuse like that. His name was Moses. In Exodus 4:10 we hear him say to God, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either heretofore or since Thou hast spoken to thy servant; but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

But the Lord knew this for what it was - a second attempt to avoid His call to work in His kingdom. God had a task for Moses, but Moses did not want to obey. But God showed His patience and mercy to Moses and performed two signs for him. Even these signs were not enough for him, for then he comes with his excuse of not being eloquent. This angers the Lord. He says, in verse 11, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach what you will speak." Moses still sputters and the Lord becomes even angrier and sends Aaron along with Moses. Still, Moses must go. Verse 15 continues, "... I will be with your mouth and his mouth..."

Moses and Aaron are sent to tell the people about their God. They are to tell the Egyptians about the God of heaven and earth. They have to communicate.

Later, when God has given His people the ten words of the covenant, Moses instructs the people more about communicating.

In Deuteronomy 6:7 ff Moses says, "...and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as signs upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the door-posts of your house and on your gates." In other words you shall always be busy communicating my words to those around you - and especially to your children.

Still later Jesus, having suffered and died to make satisfaction for sin, instructed the apostles, and in them, the church to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19, 20). The apostle Paul continues this instruction in Romans 10: 14 when he asks, "And how are they to hear without a preacher?"

We can only conclude that the message of salvation, the Word of God, must be communicated. This communication must be to the household of faith: the family, the church, the schools, as well as to all nations.

The advent of new and faster communications also reminds us of the imminent return of our Lord. Everywhere we look we find things happening at exasperating speeds, be it the falling away into sin, travel, or communication. It makes us think of the Lord's promise that, for the sake of the elect, the final days will be shortened. But when our Saviour returns what will He find us doing? Will He find our one communication talent buried in the ground? Or will He find us working with the two, the five, or the ten He gave us?

Some have questioned the wisdom of the Internet, while others have deplored the advent of the computer. Concern has been expressed that widespread contact with numerous ideas and views will lead many into confusion. If used indiscriminately this danger is very real. But as with so many things, we must learn to use also these means of communication with care. Yet we should not overlook the lack of scriptural knowledge and understanding that often leads to an inability to answer questions about our faith from those who live in our surroundings. These surroundings may have expanded because of the new technology, but these contacts must still be considered to be our neighbours.

Rather than avoid the developments of technology, we must be increasingly aware of the need to understand what we believe and see to it that our children and brothers and sisters know the whole truth of scripture. This should not primarily lead to coffee houses or neighbourhood Bible studies, but rather to a review of how we talk with our children at home, hiking in the mountains, or sitting together after the services on Sundays. It is a reminder to read and study God's Word and those things that will help us to understand it. It is a reminder to bone up on our communication. We must arm ourselves, our children, and each other with the whole armour of faith. Then we will be able to withstand the fiery darts of the evil one, and having done all, we will stand forever in the eternal rest of our Saviour.

Reformed Polemics wants to assist in warning against deformation and apostasy. It wants to be a catalyst in the communication between parents and children, brothers and sisters. It wants to help

make Christians strong in their ability to pro-claim the full truth of God's grace and justice, His glory and majesty.

We pray that our heavenly Father will bless our labours and that many of you will contribute by sharing your gifts of communication and knowledge. PdB

## **PROPHETS OF ROCK**

By Rev. J. Bruning (taken from Una Sancta - June 10, 1995)

Australia is intent on going down the path of open rebellion against God. This past fortnight we have witnessed the Northern Territory government legalize voluntary euthanasia. Over the past decades we have seen our parliaments pass other legislation such as laws for easy divorce and the virtual elimination of censorship that have fostered in our country a mentality of rebellion and lawlessness. We believe that these developments spell a dark future for our country. Our leaders and social commentators, however, tell us we are now more enlightened and compassionate. These two views represent two worlds; one, obedient to Scriptures, says that these developments are contrary to God's Word and are therefore wrong; the other says that these laws give man more freedom and are therefore good. These are two fundamentally conflicting beliefs - the antithesis in action.

What brought the Northern Territory parliament to make this far reaching decision - one that most of the world's politicians have not yet dared to make? In search of an answer it is sobering to take stock of what has happened in Australia during the post World War period. In the context of events in the western world, I will look at some of the main events that have shaped Australian society.

The humanist counter culture movement of the late 50's and 60's, better known as the "hippie era" or "teenage revolution", which began in the United States, had a tremendous influence in Australia as this article will show. It laid the foundation for enormous change in our land. Its philosophy was strongly anti-Christian and anti-establishment. It rejected the Christian faith and ridiculed the concept of sin, marriage, family, and Christian based traditions. It wanted nothing to do with the Church, civil government or any other form of authority. It also rejected capitalism, the "West's" form of economy. It replaced all this with its own doctrine of lawlessness expressing it in its own language: freedom, liberation, love, pacifism, justice, and equality.

While the universities and the thinkers produced many of the ideas, popular culture (especially music, cinema, drama and popular literature), made these ideas more concrete and became the main loud speakers of these messages. The humanistic anti-Christian ideas were picked up by popular culture artists and woven into their work, especially pop and rock music that exploded onto the scene in the 1960's. All kind of topics were tackled and not a stone was left unturned in the all out assault to revolutionize society. The Beatles sang "All you need is Love". They sang of "freedom" offered by drugs and alcohol and promoted unbridled sex. The Rolling Stones savagely screamed "I can get no satisfaction" (out of society's - Christian- traditions). They bellowed out "Sympathy for the Devil". In their music they denigrated life, for example through "Too much Blood", a song

which describes a man cutting off a woman's head; they maligned marriage and fidelity. They promoted blasphemy, idolatry, homosexuality, self-centeredness, in short an entirely do-what-you-like and the Devil-may-care mentality. And all the other prophets lined up: Elvis Presley, Joan Baez (the pacifist), Alice Cooper (who performed mock executions on stage), Elton John, all pouring their anti-Christian doctrines into hungry minds. This pop and rock music which took the western world by storm was a very effective Trojan horse to deliver messages.

These musical prophets were aided by a strong ally: technology, especially in mass communication including new recording techniques, modernized television and satellite communication. In early 1960 there was a first ever world-wide televised show "Our World" which reached an audience of more than 700 million at once around the globe. On it the Beatles sang their "All you need is Love". This event was symbolic of the decades to come when many would absorb the new "gospel" made possible via modern technology. These doctrines were also preached through other forms of popular culture such as drama, literature and cinema.

Humanism, popular culture and communication technology combined as a devastating force that also invaded and saturated Australian culture, shaping the minds of countless young Australians. You may recall the Beatles and Rolling Stones visits to our country in 1964 and 1965 respectively; the publication of the "Rolling Stone" magazine and the youth-marketed films which challenged society's tradition. Australia's universities embraced the counter culture ideas; the Monash University Student's Paper "Lot's Wife" led the anti-capitalist revolution. You will probably remember the Pacifist movement in Australia which was the spearhead of the anti-Vietnam war rallies in our streets. You will recall the pop and rock music on your crystal sets and radios; the little 45 rpm records. Then there was the stage production of "Hair" in Sydney which confronted the nation with its full nudity and four letter words, challenging our censorship laws and public morals. It was this theatre production that led to the end of strict censorship across the board. A homosexual organization was set up and women's liberation groups were formed. Looking back, it is clear that it was an all out assault against everything that was conservative in our land.

It completely changed the outlook of the younger Australian generation. And as Australia went into the 1970's, these people became our parliamentarians, judges, lecturers, authors, parents, and journalists.

Having laid this foundation, the anti-Christian prophets targeted our parliaments in the 1970's. Not surprisingly, they were able to openly promote a radical program of legislative reform. It is remarkable to see the extent of their program; it included:

- 1) Legislation for easy abortion
- 2) Legislation for euthanasia
- 3) Legislation for easy divorce
- 4) Abolition of all censorship or control of pornography
- 5) Abolition of religious education in schools
- 6) Legislation for homosexual acts between consenting adults
- 7) Permissive laws on the use of 'soft' drugs

8) Legislation to secure 'equality' for all (read: especially for women and children)

Over the next 20 years much of this program was translated into law. The radical ideas screamed out by the rock stars in the 1960's became enshrined in law and were accepted as normal. We have a Family Law Act that allows very easy divorce, wrecking countless families; equal opportunity legislation has "liberated" women and created empty homes; thousands of children are raised in taxpayer-funded daycare places; our parliaments have given homosexuality the big stick; homosexual families are recognized, legislation has reduced censorship to tokenism resulting in violence, adultery and pornography in many homes on the silver screen; thousands of unborn children are murdered every year; drugs are freely available.

Euthanasia has now been legalized by one Australian parliament with others to follow. The decision to legalize euthanasia should come as no surprise; it is the logical extension of a process that has been going on in Australia for decades.

Humanism is marching on and its target is to bludgeon everyone into submission. It will continue this quest unceasingly through the nation's thinkers. They will send their messages to those who produce rock and rap, film, and literature. And cinemas, festivals and theatres will inject it into society. But the most effective loud-speakers for the false prophecies will be the electronic media which will battle tirelessly for the nation's minds. This battle is a very real one for, ultimately, it is the Evil One who employs human-ism for his own intent.

The future does indeed not look bright. The passing of euthanasia legislation is merely one step in a line of others to come. As unfaithfulness to the Bible increases so lawless-ness will increase.

Scriptures have said that the lawless one will come, and that the "coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders." And many will believe in the lie because they do "not believe the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness" (Thess.2: 9, 12). However, we not despair, for the lawlessness we witness around us has been prophesied in Scriptures; in addition, Christ's authority is far superior to any other power and those who believe in the ascended Christ, seated at God's right hand, will be saved.

## **FORGIVENESS**

By Rev. J. Moesker

How should we react when a family member, a brother or sister in the Lord or co-worker wrongs us? Are we to become bitter towards the other person or look for ways to avenge the wrong done to us? Of course not! As we confess concerning the sixth commandment in Lord's Day 40, God hates envy, hatred, anger and desire of revenge, and regards all these as murder.

What should be our reaction, then? Some have pointed to Matthew 18:21 and 22 where Peter asks Jesus how often we should forgive a brother who sins against us. Jesus responds:

"I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." People conclude from this that you just have to accept the wrong with grace and patience and walk away and forgive and forget.

But is that what Jesus means here? Not if you look at the context of Matthew 18 about mutual discipline in the church. Jesus has that whole process of admonition in mind when He speaks in verse 22 about forgiving seventy times seven. There is no limit to the number of times this process may need to be followed. But it must be followed every time so that you may truly forgive your brother or sister who sinned against you.

In other words, there is never a time when you may say, “Well, if that’s how he’s going to act, forget it. I’m not saying anything. I’ll just swallow this too and let him do what he wants.” Forgiveness involves seeking the other out, telling him his sin so that he sees what he did” wrong and giving every opportunity to restore the relationship with you as well as with God. That’s helping your brother according to Matthew 18.

Comparing Scripture with Scripture (a truly Reformed principle) lends further strength to this interpretation. In Luke 17:3 and 4 Jesus says, “Take heed to yourselves,” in other words, be careful how you react when you are wronged.

And how are you to react? Jesus says, “If your brother sins (‘against you’ in some translations)...” The sense is clear enough from what follows in verse 4, “and if he sins against you seven times...” Jesus is speaking in the whole context about the situation where one is seriously wronged by a brother. What then?

Jesus doesn’t say, “Just take it and forgive him.” That wouldn’t help the other person to see his wrong. It wouldn’t help the relationship because quick forgiveness doesn’t clear the air. And it wouldn’t help you because you open yourself to all kinds of wrong thoughts and feelings later on about this unresolved wrong. And you don’t show love for the neighbour if you leave him with his sin. No, Jesus says that if your brother sins against you, rebuke him. “Rebuke” is a pretty strong word here. It means “to reprimand or scold someone”. Take him to task over it. Go to him and confront him with his sin.

Of course, Jesus doesn’t mean that you have the right to ‘rub his face’ in his sin in order to humiliate him or to exact some kind of revenge. The purpose of rebuke is to save your brother, giving him every opportunity to repent from sin, to be reconciled to you and to God.

You can think here of how God deals with sinners. He doesn’t leave them in the dark about their sins. He rebukes and confronts them with their sins. He shows His anger against their sins so that they see the seriousness of their sins, and so that they repent. God’s law strictly preached is meant to save us (Lord’s Day 44, Q&A 115).

Rebuke leads to genuine repentance, including sorrow over sin and a heartfelt desire for correction. Such repentance leads to forgiveness. As Jesus says in Luke 17:3, “...And if he repents, forgive him...” With repentance comes an obligation to forgive, no matter what or how often. No cherishing of anger or desire of revenge, but forgiveness.

“To forgive”, I read somewhere, literally means “to subtract”. One subtract one equals zero. Four subtract two equals two. If there is not real repentance or real forgiveness, there will always be a remainder, of which we’ll both be reminded every time we see each other. But if there is real repentance and real forgiveness, then you subtract what remains between you. Then you can greet each other honestly again when you meet in the street or in church or at a social gathering. And

then he also senses that there is nothing between you and him anymore. It is a relief to him too that the sin is no longer a barrier between you. Think of the father's attitude in the parable of the prodigal son; he completely accepted the son when he returned.

But now you might still wonder what if my brother doesn't repent after I have rebuked him and tried to show him his sin time and again? Well, in that case he makes it impossible for you to really forgive him. You cannot truly make things right again, though you tried. And then his sin is completely his own responsibility too.

That doesn't give you license to hate him and to seek revenge. No, you are to still love him, to pray for repentance and for reconciliation between yourself as well as God. But you cannot truly forgive unless the other truly repents. Someone who is unforgiving can sabotage reconciliation. We should be ready to forgive, even seven times a day, as Jesus says. And someone who is unrepentant can also sabotage reconciliation. The other also needs to turn to you and to say: "I repent" before you can forgive.

Forgiveness!?! The God of the covenant is our example (last part of Matthew 18). He is always ready to forgive in Christ - no matter how often we fall and repent. So we must be ready and willing to forgive our brother too. That means seeking his repentance by confronting him with his sin; and forgiving over and over when he does repent. The aim is to forgive and to be reconciled with the brother. For how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! (Psalm 133)