

Monday, September 12, 2016 - Pretty Pigs by Philip Davis

“Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” — Matthew 15:7-9 (NKJV)

Daily news cycles flood us with reports of “hogs” at cosmetics counters. Politicians of various viewpoints and parties accuse their opponents of putting “lipstick on a pig” in order to make an allegedly undesirable policy or position appear to be more attractive. Purportedly, by applying a little lip-gloss, one covers up the supposedly disgusting thing that wears it. Handlers hope that the stuff is smear-proof and won’t wear away over time. Formerly, people described this as “trying to make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.” The appearance may change, but the material cannot.

Similarly, most people try to put the best construction on their own views, actions, and beliefs. Marxist communists describe their ideology as empowering the people while overthrowing moneyed tyrants. Political repression in China bears the description of “re-education.” Offenders are considered unenlightened. If one disagrees with the government, he is imprisoned and brainwashed into silence or agreement. Individuals practice much the same thing. If someone has to “stretch” the truth in order to accomplish an end he believes to be worthy, he praises his own compassion and deep insight, “rising above mere rules.” If someone wants to enter a sexual relationship with a person not his mate, he calls it “a love affair,” claiming that love is the supreme principle of life. The Bible would condemn this as fornication or adultery. Some observers critique the tendency of prominent national figures to portray their moral failings as “making mistakes” rather than admitting the sinful nature of their actions and repenting. People on both sides of the political “aisle” use this artful dodge. Cynicism grows each time.

Religiously, when people (perhaps wishing to broaden their church’s popular appeal) want to promote a practice or agenda offensive either to other believers or to the instruction of the Bible, they often choose to “reframe” the issue to best serve their purpose. Change-agents decry “old, tired, legalistic traditionalism practiced by dinosaurs on their way to extinction.” Some ignorant people re-define opposition to same-sex marriage as hatefulness and exclusionism which Christ would not practice. A few might redefine Jesus as a “community organizer” when He was really a reformer of individuals and the Savior of the Church (Eph. 5:23). He never violated God’s will for some so-called higher goal. He knew that true beauty in God’s view requires honoring Him in thought and deed. Psalms 29:2; 96:9 (KJV) Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

When people wish to “modernize” the church of the Lord, attuning it to contemporary culture’s worldly attitudes and expectations, they often start applying “make-up” to the message. The result is a fashionable pig. Consider the current attempt to expand the role of women into public (mixed-gender settings) spiritual leadership. One group may ordain female bishops. Another may encourage women to preach to mixed assemblies. Another may appoint women to be deacons. The subtler (sneakier) approach is to move

women, an inch at a time, into public roles in worship assemblies. A common disguise involves using women to carry communion trays from the front of the auditorium to worshipers, using thin, shallow excuses in the attempt to justify the forbidden practice. Generally, such is only a prelude to a grander plan to enlarge that role later when the first change has become familiar and accepted. Perhaps, they reason, people eventually will accept them in full leadership positions. A familiar question asks, "How does one boil a frog?" The answer is "One degree at a time." Scripture still says: 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (NKJV) Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.

Painted pigs know no gender. The real swine rooting around here are the policies and the basic attitude of rebellion to God's revealed will. Pork-barrel theology approaches God with the intent of getting what one wants so that he can do as he will, without restriction (Ezekiel 14:4). When people choose to embrace an agenda and send it for a cosmetic makeover, the result is "a pig in lipstick." Religiously, one might call it "Christian cosmetology." The beauty is skin deep, but its God-defying ugliness goes "all the way to the bone." Make-up is attractive when it enhances basic beauty. When it is employed to "cover up" an underlying ugliness, perceptive observers will not be fooled. If deceivers start painting pigs, vote them out of office or vote with your feet. Do not become a partaker in other men's sins (1 Timothy 5:22; Romans 16:17-18). Glowing descriptions of the beauty of rebellion to God are like lipstick on a pig. Beneath lies a bunch of bologna. Who needs pretty pigs? They still have mud on their minds (2 Peter 2:21-22). Take some good advice: never "buy a pig in a poke," even if they throw in a tube of lipstick.

Remember—you are loved. — Philip Davis