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Book Reviews

The Theology of the Reformers

Timothy George

Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman/Holman Press, 1988.

337 pages, cloth, \$21.95.

Seldom in the recent decade have I been able to read such a highly researched, serious, scholarly, and massively relevant work with the degree of relaxation, delight, and anticipation as I experienced in reading and re-reading Timothy George's *The Theology of the Reformers*. Readers of *Reformation & Revival Journal* will find the approach and concerns of Dr. George both enlightening and challenging.

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Purpose

This work does not attempt a general survey of Europe during the Reformation period, nor is it an attempt to develop a general synthesis of Reformation theology. George has chosen to focus on the "theological self-understanding of four major reformers" (p. 18). Those words, "theological self-understanding," define precisely his approach distinguishing this book from the growing number of social- and psycho-treatments of religious figures. Luther, Bunyan, Whitefield, Calvin and others have bled beneath the social scientist's knife, and our zeal for reformation and revival is none the better for it. But George's treatment is different. He believes theology defined the thinking and activity of these sixteenth-century figures more than any other factor. For that reason, in his own intriguing and elegant style, George invites the reader to hear the Reformers' words, grasp their thoughts, and empathize with their affections. No need to wonder if one is hearing Luther (or Zwingli, et al.) or merely the ventriloquized concerns of George, for the author's success depends on whether "we have asked ourselves their questions and listened well to their answers" (p. 19).

Presentation

Thorough and balanced research are central to George's method. He is no stranger to the questions and characterizations that emerge in the secondary literature and integrates these into the discussion in an appropriate fashion. He does not, however, allow others to dominate his work; he is not their slave. The primary sources are the paint in which George's brush constantly dips.

His organization of the material gives necessary structure but is not die-cast. Common themes run through each chapter (Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, etc.) but each Reformer is allowed to speak for himself on each of these themes. George sorts out carefully the context of each theologian. He forfeits nothing of the uniqueness of the personality, concerns, and contributions of each. While doing this, he develops a balance between freshness of content and thematic consistency in presentation. In the end he is able to distill the evangelical unity that persists in Reformation theology in spite of the separateness caused by geography, culture, politics, and personal idiosyncrasies (chap. 7).

George employs a writing style that is clear, lively, engaging and at the same time worthy of his substantial and exalted subject. His sentences are filled with images, analogies, action, and word pictures which make his discussions as visceral as they are cerebral.

George has a gift for selecting quotations that are at once lucidly illustrative of his point, insightful into the personality of his subject, and marvelously intriguing. Menno calls David Joris a "dunghill of a man" (p. 280), Luther calls the pope a member of the church in the same way that spit, snot, pus, feces, and syphilis are members of the body (p. 88) and calls himself a "poor stinking bag of maggots" (p. 53), Calvin insists that we must "apply ourselves teachable" (p. 198) to God's Word and that prayer is not an exercise in

"breaking God's eardrums" (p. 228), and Zwingli represents idolators as thinking "God to be so rough and cruel that we dare not come to him" (p. 121). This is not only theology; it is life and concretizes the Reformers' intent to sanctify the secular (pp. 317, 321).

Applicatory Aspects

George's personal involvement with his subject adds to its power and does not detract from its scholarship. He does not stand aloof, daring only to analyze, but includes a most important chapter in which he discusses "The Abiding Validity of Reformation Theology." The four couplets, Sovereignty and Christology, Scripture and Ecclesiology, Worship and Spirituality, Ethics and Eschatology, fit together well and provide an opportunity, not only for a summary of "wasness," but a projection of "oughtness." George, calling the Reformation a "movement of the Spirit of God," affirms without intimidation that Reformation theology "challenges the church to listen reverently and obediently to what God has once and for all said ... and once and for all done in Jesus Christ" (p. 310). This approach conforms much more closely to the purposes of the Reformers themselves than that of Steven Ozment, who sees the major contribution of the Reformation as a resistance to the "bullying of conscience" and its major failure its attempt "to ennoble people beyond their capacities."¹

Two theological emphases demonstrate George's penchant for clarity, fairness, and relevance. His historical treatment of Luther's doctrine of justification by faith and imputed righteousness is powerful and enlightening (pp. 62-73). Another refreshing emphasis is George's balanced treatment of the doctrines of God's sovereignty in providence and redemption (pp. 73-79, 122-26, 204-13, 310-14) and the bondage of man's will. Often these doctrines, when not ignored as an embarrassment, are treated with carica-

ture or sneer. George demonstrates reverent scholarship in approaching the “consuming fire” and has empathized with the Reformers’ understanding of the power, freedom, evangelical humiliation, and assurance that these realities bring to theology and life.

Suggestion

The portions on the doctrine of Scripture could benefit by a more expanded treatment. Overall, the material is helpful because of George’s characteristic care in historical interpretation. George points out that “All of the reformers, including the radicals, accepted the divine origin and infallible character of the Bible” (p. 315). The Reformers’ theological method assumed the unity of revelation and history (e.g., p. 85) as well as the superiority of Scripture to tradition, popes, councils, philosophy, and any subsequent claims to immediate inspiration. George’s evidence shows with certainty that the Reformers believed in the objective inspiration of the Scriptures, describing the writers as amenuenses while maintaining the historical and literary contextuality of their true humanity (pp. 194-95).

Further attention to two matters could empower our grasp of the contemporary relevance of the Reformers’ teaching on Scripture with no violation of their intent or meaning. To the first of these issues that I will mention, George has given a clear and satisfactory response.

The second is a historiographical matter and does not admit, or need, any immediate clarifying statement.

First, distinguishing clearly between Calvin’s view of accommodation and the subsequent Socinian view of accommodation would be helpful. The Socinian view allowed for errors of various sorts in Scripture, distinguishing between its infallibility in some areas and fallibility in others. Andrew Fuller vigorously opposed the Socinian construction of accommodation and insisted that giving up the

plenary inspiration of the Scriptures was the same as to give them up as the Word of God.²

George’s discussion of accommodation (pp. 192-94, 316-17) certainly has no kinship to the Socinian view; yet, an unclear statement within that context gives rise to my concern. He states that Calvin “doubted ... the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter” and yet regarded it as canonical (p. 195). Should the reader suppose that Calvin accepted the canonical, and thus inspired, status of a pseudepigraphical writing which seeks in the most aggressive way to mislead the reader to the conclusion that the correspondence is from the apostle Peter? On the contrary, Calvin argues, “If it is received as canonical, we must admit that Peter is the author, not only because it bears his name, but also because he testifies that he lived with Christ. It would have been a fiction unworthy of a minister of Christ to pretend to another personality.” Calvin goes on to say that the epistle has come from Peter, “not that he wrote it himself, but that one of his disciples composed by his command what the necessity of the times demanded.”³

George recognizes the importance of this issue and in the journal *Theology* has written that Calvin “could have signed in good faith the Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy.” He also has correctly pointed out that the reader must remember that Calvin’s concerns about the Bible were not generated by the attacks of enlightenment rationalism but by the sixteenth-century Christian “battle for the Bible.” The struggle was over “authority (against the claims made for the apocryphal writings), and interpretation (against the unchecked allegorizing of medieval exegetes).”⁴

The second and related matter in which George could be more decisive is the current historiography concerning the inerrancy of Scripture (pp. 82, 196). On this issue middle ground between Rogers/McKim and Woodbridge is non-existent.

Conclusion

George's research is thorough, his commitment to the "abiding validity of reformation theology" is well-demonstrated, and his love for Scripture is genuine. He invites his readers to recall Luther's response to Erasmus, "One must delight in assertions, or else be no Christian" (p. 308). The readers of this journal will want to "assert" these Reformation truths in ways appropriate for our day and recapture the vision of the "church always reforming."

Endnotes

- 1 Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 437-38.
- 2 Andrew Fuller, *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, 3 vol., ed. Joseph Belcher (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, ca. 1845) 2:229. Fuller has a lengthy discussion of the Socinian view of Scripture, *Ibid.* 195-206, which could be very helpful for our own day.
- 3 John Calvin, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries: Hebrews and I and II Peter*, trans. W. B. Johnson. ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 325.
- 4 Timothy George, "Response to Reflections on ... *The Theology of the Reformers*" in *The Theological Educator*, no. 43 (Spring 1991), 63. This is the theological journal published by the faculty at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

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Church Discipline That Heals

John White and Ken Blue

Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press (1985).

238 pages, paper, \$10.99.

Since the very beginning of the church (Acts 5), and even before (Matthew 18), church discipline was intended to be a vital part of church life. However, it has clearly been neglected for sundry reasons through the ages. As the church today seeks to be biblical in all of its life and practice, a restoration of biblical church discipline is absolutely mandatory. John White and Ken Blue have written a thorough and biblically sound book on the subject. The book is titled *Church Disciplines That Heals* (IVP, 1985, originally published under the title *Healing the Wounded*).

The authors define church discipline in general as "the training of the church by the church" (p. 18) and further, "anything the body of Christ does to train Christians in holiness, calling them to follow their Lord more closely" (p. 19). The theme of their book zeros in on one aspect of church discipline defined as a loving confrontation of a believer who is in sin. Church discipline seeks to bring about the restoration of the sinner to righteousness, insures and protects the purity of the church, is primarily focused on reconciliation (the individual reconciled with himself, with the church, and with God), and lastly, creates the possibility of freedom in Christ. These four aims are carefully explained and supported by Scripture (chapters 4-7).

The authors begin with the need. Their use of up-to-date and anonymous case studies illustrate the critical need for biblical discipline. They quote John Stott, "The secular world is almost wholly unimpressed with the church today. There is widespread departure from Christian moral standards. So long as the church tolerates sin in itself and does

not judge itself ... and fails to manifest visibly the power of Jesus Christ to save from sin, it will never attract the world to Christ" (p. 20).

The authors thoroughly study two key biblical passages on the topic. In chapter 8 they examine Matthew 18. The Corinthian passages (1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:4-11 and 2 Cor. 7:9,11) are presented in chapter 9. These two chapters are well done and characterize the authors' convictions and attempts at following Scripture in these matters.

The barriers, or hindrances, to corrective church discipline are considered. In this the authors display unusual insight into the makeup of the church and of believers. Among many issues they deal with is defensiveness. The habit of defending oneself when feeling threatened has short-circuited many loving and Spirit-led attempts at correction. Next, the abuses of church discipline are considered. The exercise of harsh and misguided church discipline through the years has caused many leaders to shy away from its practice today. The issue of individualism is very helpfully covered. "Our individualism (as well as our sinfulness) militates against exercising corrective church discipline. To be members of the people of God means that our physical and spiritual well-being becomes our brother's business and his well-being becomes ours. But such attitudes are so alien to the Western church that when we do opt for biblical discipline, we will be criticized" (pp. 29-30). The calloused conscience has also become a severe hindrance. "Our lack of sensitivity to the horrors of sin is a further roadblock. We resist the idea of dealing with the sin in others because our consciences have been dulled if not seared" (p. 33).

The last eight chapters deal with practical considerations. Again the authors write with exceptional insight, using profitable illustrations and solid biblical exegesis. They consider the steps of Matthew 18 and walk the reader

through each step, outlining the possible pitfalls. The nature, need, and discernment of repentance are explored. In chapter 14, titled "Sins That Don't Go Away," they deal with those habitual or besetting sins that are often found in the body of Christ. The place of public and private confession is detailed in chapter 15. Chapter 16 briefly touches on the topic of sin in the lives of church leaders.

The appendix, "Binding and Loosing," by John Howard Yoder (a study outline of Matthew 18:18), though lengthy and admittedly fragmented, is worth reading, studying, and working through.

In the final chapter the authors call the readers and the church at large to action. There must be willingness to give of ourselves to each other if effective growth in holiness is to take place. They promote the small group approach to ministry. "Large groups can never be the seedbeds of healthy church discipline. If it is to be full-orbed, it must begin in intimacy, concern and fidelity found in a small fellowship group" (p. 204). They conclude with a call to arms:

Our book is a challenge to gird on armor and draw swords. It is a plea to stop playing at church, to set aside personal ambition and the pursuit of personal comfort and to take risks. It would be better to fight and lose than to allow the present situation to continue. But there is no reason why we should lose. We are invited to run, sword in hand, in the steps of a conqueror (p. 209).

I found this book to be helpful, useful and insightful, a tool to use in the life of the church. The authors' commitment to Scripture was evident. Their everyday illustrations and stories were heart-breaking, necessary, and effective. Overall, I agree with Ray Stedman who writes in the foreword, "Everyone confronted by the need to wash a brother's or sister's dirty feet will be helped by it."

The one negative criticism that this reviewer would make has to do with the authors' primary emphasis on reconciliation. Though this aim is needed and appropriate, I felt that the authors avoided the mandatory emphasis on the holiness of God and His demand for holiness in His people. Granted, in chapter 5, "The Holy, Spotless Bride," they say with accuracy, "Does our preoccupation with building programs, with our public image in the community, with our innovative programming or with our church growth suffocate our concern for the holiness of God's people" (p. 59)? Yet they seem to slightly miss the centrality of God's holiness in all of this matter. It may have been assumed. However, I feel it must be clearly emphasized.

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Ashamed of the Gospel

John F. MacArthur, Jr.
Wheaton: Crossway Books (1993),
254 pages, cloth, \$17.99.

In the mid 1970s, John MacArthur went through 1 Corinthians with a dragnet responding to the emerging excesses of the charismatic movement. Now he is at it again. And this time he is concerned with the church growth movement in his new book, *Ashamed of the Gospel*.

The essence of the book is a loud complaint over the devaluation of direct biblical preaching, a willingness to become "seeker sensitive" at the expense of the clear presentation of the Gospel. MacArthur does this by comparing present trends in the evangelical church with the rise of liberal theology in the last century. His view of the current visible church is placed over the matrix of Spurgeon's

"Down-Grade Controversy."

To MacArthur's credit, he recognizes that those who embrace "seeker-sensitive" techniques are well-meaning. In the same manner, the rise of theological liberalism in the nineteenth century was not a deliberate attempt to undermine orthodoxy.¹ Nevertheless, the net result of a softened Gospel is eventually no Gospel at all.

The rocket fuel of the church growth movement is an understanding of 1 Corinthians, chapters nine and ten, which maintain that "becoming all things to all men" means embracing any-and everything in a popular culture with the idea that such "seeker sensitivity" will attract the unsaved to the church. Once there, they will hear the Gospel and, we hope, come to faith. The contention is that Christian liberty gives us necessary wide latitude in the particulars of public worship. In church growth parlance, this is "contextualization," or "being relevant."

History is full of people who have done all sorts of silly things based on this understanding of Scripture. Fortunately, MacArthur resists the temptation to display these. Instead, he takes us on a careful tour of the above mentioned portion of 1 Corinthians, showing that "becoming all things to all men" is the voluntary laying down of Christian liberty for the sake of others' salvation. Paul never said, "to the hedonist, I became a hedonist." No, the issue is one of getting one's own appetites out of the way in order to serve another with the bare, uncluttered presentation of the Gospel. The Pauline approach never invokes a need for mauve carpet, an arsenal of two hundred dollar microphones, and a worship team genuflecting before an overhead projector with sumptuous pictures of Yosemite Valley as a background for song lyrics.

If there is a weakness in MacArthur's book, it is the sense that the particulars of a worship service other than preaching are relatively unimportant so long as they do not get in

the way of the pulpit presentation. Indeed, MacArthur seems to regard music and drama as “entertainment,” despite the Bible’s direct mandate that worship music be an integral part (not subservient to) of the teaching ministry.² And we have to be dense to not see drama at every turn in the Bible. Therefore, the question is not “whether or not to integrate music and drama,” but rather “which music?” and “which drama?” Here we come to “Sproul’s Law of Aesthetics: Every form is an art form, and every art form communicates something.”³ To that I add the corollary: Every aesthetic form is theological, and every theological form is aesthetic. How could it be otherwise when the God of the cosmos does everything for His own pleasure? Pleasure is the province of aesthetics.

The problem with the church growth movement is not that it has a heightened interest in aesthetic forms (which MacArthur dismisses disparagingly as “entertainment”), but rather, that it allows secular aesthetic forms to determine the presentation of the Gospel, thus changing the Gospel right at its very roots. To be truly contextual, we need to develop aesthetic forms shaped by the Gospel.

The above gripe notwithstanding, MacArthur’s exposition of 1 Corinthians, chapters nine and ten, is worth the price of the book several times over. Those of us who smell a rat in the church growth movement often find ourselves on the low ground of an argument with church-growthers who are saying, “I just want to see people come to Christ.” We are characterized as wet blankets to evangelism when, in fact, we dearly want to see people come to Christ, too. We just want to be sure that they get there not being deceived into believing that some tawdry way station is the point of arrival.

MacArthur’s book is invaluable in preparing us practically for the Great Commission within our own culture. It will also help us in reasoning through this charged issue

with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

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Endnotes

- 1 This is succinctly documented in Robert Godfrey’s “Haven’t We Seen This Megashift Before?” (*Modern Reformation*, Jan./Feb. 1993, 14-18).
- 2 See Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16
- 3 R. C. Sproul, “The Recovery of Worship” (*Reformation & Revival*, 1.4.33).

Addicted to Recovery

Gary Almy & Carol Tharp Almy with Jerry Jenkins
Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers (1994).
251 pages, paperback, n.p.

The authors have given us a timely book for anyone who knows someone in therapy or has been in therapy himself. That should include nearly everyone in the 1990s when “recovery” is the latest buzzword! Gary Almy and his wife, Carol, know their subject intimately. Gary is an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at Loyola University School of Medicine and the associate chief of staff at Edward Hines, Jr., Veterans Hospital in Hines, Illinois. He has practiced psychiatry for twenty-one years. Carol is also a physician with a private practice in dermatology, and is on the faculty of Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago, Illinois.

Addicted to Recovery recounts case studies of real (disguised for privacy) people. These doctor-authors unpeel each layer of modern psychotherapy as it occurs. The result is such compelling reading that this reviewer could not put the book down in the middle of a case history! It is

revealing to “look in on” real psychiatric sessions and “see” how a psychiatrist draws a patient to conclude he has repressed memories, multiple personalities, addictions, or an empty “love tank.” It is sobering to see what can happen to a person who begins therapy fairly well adjusted, and many months and many dollars later the result is the negative disruption of *many* lives!

Interspersed between the case studies the authors seek to inform the reader how each step of modern psychotherapy lines up negatively against biblical principles. One verse particularly jumps out at the reader when considering how much of psychotherapy relies on delving into one’s past to explain the present. Isaiah 43:18 says, “Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past.” The Almys provide Scripture references for their reasoning, not former famous psychiatrists. They provide many verses for the reader to ponder concerning the requirement of witnesses (valuable for those accused of repressed memories that never happened), the discipline process related to an offense, admonition regarding focusing on the past, revenge/justice, self-pity, and the scriptural answer to the question, “Are we victims or sinners?”

In this book one reads that Freud said, “We *are* what was done to us. We are dysfunctional (neurotic) only because of bad influences external to ourselves. This concept of Original Innocence—pure until deviated, good until polluted—is fundamental to ‘talking treatment’” (p. 217). The Almys’ scriptural answer to Freudian thoughts is this:

... the critical evaluation of psychotherapy is simple for the Christian. We are not born innocent and pure. The source of our trouble is not an adverse economy, poor bonding, or a hurting inner child. We are not powerless over an “unconscious” beyond our responsibility or control. The mind of man is a supernatural entity created in the image of God and never to be fully understood in this life (Jeremiah

17:9). Man cannot perfect or heal himself by himself, nor can he by using secret knowledge or a therapist-helper. Man’s efforts in that direction are offensive to God (Galatians 3:3), and reliance on such false teaching is fatal to our ultimate purpose to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The pillars of the psychotherapy industry are neither testable hypotheses nor proven laws of science. They are doctrines of a false religion, a false gospel (p. 219).

Gary and Carol Almy delve into the 1990s’ priority of self-esteem for every individual. The modern church has grasped the self-esteem gospel to the extent that the early church teachings through hymnody sound totally foreign. These authors write, “Anyone who would write hymns like Isaac Watts would be labeled as having a severe problem with self-worth. Watts stood in awe at the fact that God would devote ‘that sacred head for such a worm as I.’ The modern church knows little of that awe” (p. 231). Most of us are familiar with Charles Wesley’s words: “My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth, and followed thee. Amazing love, how can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me!” The Almys’ reply to this in *Addicted to Recovery* is, “Do our chains ever fall off via our psychologized gospel? No, they bind us only more tightly” (p. 232).

This reviewer could go on and on quoting powerful passages from this book! It is extremely readable, has “easy-to-see at night without your glasses” large print and gripping stories. In fact, while reading this book, I called my friend so many times to read passages to her that she said if I continued she wouldn’t have to read the book herself! I even shared portions of this book with my family at dinner. *Addicted to Recovery* is a much-needed book for our era when so many feel the answer to life’s problems is a recovery group or a therapist rather than the gospel!

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All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes

Kenneth A. Myers

Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway (1989).

213 pages, paper, \$10.99.

Kenneth A. Myers opens with the proposition that “the challenge of living with popular culture may well be as serious for modern Christians as persecution and plagues were for the saints of earlier centuries” (p. xii). The subjunctive mood (“may”) is there for the sake of etiquette. The rest of the book supports the proposition with an imposing show of force.

Myers is not another foaming-at-the-mouth fundamentalist with howitzers trained on that devil rock ‘n roll music and on the movies. No, for eight years, he was a cultural editor for National Public Radio, and as such, was (and remains) steeped in what the world is saying about popular culture. In a sense, he has the best training of the Chaldeans. The bibliography alone is a feast.

Myers points out (along with C. S. Lewis) that if we do not give thought to culture, we will still have culture, but it will be bad by default. That being the case, giving thought to culture is not an optional, hobby occupation. More recently, Martha Bayles said, “All of us need to change our tune about cultural matter. Instead of saying, ‘I don’t know much about art, but I know what I don’t like,’ we need to follow the cultural historian Jacques Barzun, who recommends learning how to say: ‘It is because I understand this work of art that I dislike it.’”¹ Certainly, such a stance seems in keeping with being “wise as serpents.”

Myers divides culture into roughly three categories: high, folk, and pop. The distinction between folk and pop cultures may not have been drawn strongly enough, not because Myers does not understand them, but because

they are so easily confused by defenders of pop culture. I think, for this reason, many have attributed obnoxious elitism to Myers, dismissing him as a propagandist for high culture. Folk and pop culture often look the same. The difference is in the means in which they are disseminated.

High culture is based on absolutes, on truth, virtue, and beauty. Folk culture emphasizes the values held by particular communities. Pop culture is designed to provide contentment for the isolated individual within the dehumanizing trends of modernity. As such, it can be as easily packaged and marketed as Barbie dolls, breath fresheners, or spark plugs. Myers quotes Abraham Kaplan: “A taste for popular art is a device for remaining in the same old world and assuring ourselves that we like it.”²

We Christians have difficulty embracing “the same old (sin infested) world” in the same way that John Bunyan’s Pilgrim/Christian could not be content with *The City of Destruction* and with *Vanity Fair*. How, then, have we come to take popular culture seriously, because, most assuredly, we have.

In the “Sixties there was a shift in the pervasive worldview proportionate to continental drift. We moved, both in and outside the church, to the view that feelings are more authoritative than objective truth in defining reality. In our time, the politics of victimization are the full flower of this shift. If it were fiction, it would be more comical than Art Buchwald, Gary Larson, and Rush Limbaugh. But it is not.

McLuhan’s famous aphorism (“The medium is the message”) may be controversial among intellectuals. In practicality, however, where feelings define truth, McLuhan is unequivocally correct and the intellectuals are left standing irrelevantly pottering on the sideline.

Myers describes television and rock music as the two media of pop culture, and thus of modernity. His concern is that the sensibilities of these two media run afoul of Chris-

tian sensibilities. This challenges contemporary Christian music as well, which is, after all, pop music for Christians.

Television presents a stimulus but makes no demands on response. Many Christians can accept this proposition with little difficulty. Billy Graham said:

Our young people, no matter where you go, are confronted with killing, murders of the most vicious sorts. I did not hear about that when I was a boy growing up. I am sure they happened, but we did not have television to bring it to us instantaneously.³

In his song, "I'm the Slime," Frank Zappa spoke for television anthropomorphically in the first person: "You will obey me while I lead you, and with the garbage that I feed you, until the day that we don't need you. Don't go for help, no one will heed you. . . . That's right folks. Don't touch that dial."⁴

It is when Myers touches rock music that hackles rise, because rock's acceptance is staggeringly universal (even among Christians). Allan Bloom noted this with dismay (Myers, p. 136). Two Temple University social scientists in 1976 made this same discovery as they sought a test group of university students who did not like rock music, but could find none.⁵

At the most distilled level, Myers maintains that, while there may be many kinds of rock music, there is just one rock music myth. "The essence of that myth was that rock would offer a form of spiritual deliverance by providing a superior form of knowledge, a form that was immediate rather than reflective, physical rather than mental, and emotional rather than volitional" (p. 137). What is so arresting about this assertion is that it is rock's most ardent adherents who are first to make this statement, not Allan Bloom, Neil Postman, and other tart old men. A "superior form of knowledge," really? No, nothing but garden variety

idolatry.

Notice how conveniently such an aesthetic behavior reinforces a worldview in which feelings are more authoritative than objective truth. For precisely this reason, all sorts of Christians have sung John Wimber's "Spirit Song," which says: "Give him (Jesus) all your years and sadness; give him all your years of pain, and you'll enter into life in Jesus' name." Astonishing! This is "another gospel" in the sense of Galatians, chapter one, and yet, we are so able to sing it even congregationally because it feels good. If you like the Carpenters, Barry Manilow, or Kenny G, you will probably like Wimber's "Spirit Song." Contemporary Christian music (which is all one or another sort of rock) is prone to fall prey to the same idolatry which besets the larger pop music world because the sensibilities necessary to enjoy the music also defy the accountability of reason.

In order to evaluate Myers' book realistically, we need to treat its most immediate objections. Bill Edgar of Westminster Seminary said of the book: "The fundamental weakness of this approach is theological. There is a neglect of the doctrines of common grace and of the creation."⁶

In other words, Myers is a grumpy elitist who does not like TV and rock 'n roll, and who refuses to see the good in these human enterprises. Therefore, he suffers a theological deficiency because, apropos the doctrines of common grace and creation, nothing is completely befouled. We should expect to see the glory of the Creator even in popular culture. Wouldn't it be more constructive and less negative to look for the good things in popular culture rather than taking a fire-breathing posture?

On the face of it, Edgar's criticism has immediate appeal. On further reflection, however, a couple of details just do not add up. First, Myers has an M.Div. degree from Westminster Seminary, the very institution where Edgar teaches. I suspect that their biblical understanding of com-

mon grace and creation would be very close, if not indistinguishable. Indeed, Myers claims: "You can enjoy popular culture without compromising Biblical principles as long as you are not dominated by the sensibility of popular culture, as long as you are not captivated by its idols" (p. 180).

No, Myers' and Edgar's differences are not over the doctrines of common grace and creation, but rather, over the application of those doctrines, in other words, over sociological data. The appropriate question is not whether God's glory is seen in every aspect of His creation and whether common grace extends to even the most vulgar thrasher band, but rather, how much does popular culture facilitate the evil of our hearts which are desperately wicked and deceitful.

On this point we touch the dark side of common grace. Jesus said even evil parents would not give their children vipers and scorpions when the children had requested fish and bread. Common grace allows unregenerate persons to see evil with clear eyes. Frank Zappa was no paragon of virtue. Even Satan sees evil quite clearly. When Satan accuses the brethren, it is for real sins. Only the imputed righteousness of Christ nullifies those accusations. In light of this, isn't it interesting that there is rising concern in the world over the adverse effect popular culture exerts on society?

Rather than reel off a list of contemporary cultural observers (and there are many) who are blowing the whistle on popular culture, I would like to revisit the prophetic thoughts of that notorious, God-hating existentialist, Aldous Huxley.

In Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), we are presented with a society in which the nuclear family is extinct, the government fosters untrammled sexual recreation, genetic engineering is employed for economic reasons, and euthanasia is a government policy. There is little correla-

tion between gainful employment and the production of goods and services. Those who suffer psychological stress have recreational drugs at their disposal under the smiling eye of the government. (Don't worry. Be happy!)

In 1994, we do not yet live in Huxley's brave new world. Still, the picture he painted in 1932 was probably perceived as fantasy then. Now it is frighteningly within the realm of reasonable imagination.

What is especially striking about Huxley's imaginary world is the means by which the sense of security is provided for the populace. In order to accomplish this delicate balance, "emotional engineers" eradicated religion and high art, and supplanted them with popular culture. Remember, Huxley was an existentialist. He did not necessarily see the eradication of religion and high art as bad. Huxley is evil, but his insight is "good" in the sense of common grace.

In our society, the worldview is being shaped more and more by popular culture, the same means by which the brave new world experienced security, or, in Francis Schaeffer's parlance, "personal peace and affluence." How can Christians be sanguine about this?

Nothing in creation can be so thoroughly corrupted by sin so as to obscure completely God's glory in that object. Beauty is one of God's attributes. It is, however, possible for salient characteristics of an object to overwhelm our perceptual faculties, our ability to respond to that stimulus in an upright manner. The nude woman in the porn magazine is beautiful. But how many of us are able to view that beauty objectively? Aaron's golden calf was probably beautiful. Nevertheless, idolatry renders aesthetic characteristics insignificant. Even God-ordained aesthetic objects can be turned into objects of idolatry. This happened with Moses' bronze serpent.⁷

It may be that excessive attention directed to the doc-

trines of creation and common grace lead to the neglect of a more fundamental doctrine. I am speaking here of the depravity of man.

Neville Chamberlain returned to Britain from his Munich meeting with Hitler saying those famous rosy words, "I believe it is peace in our time." In hindsight, we see that he underestimated the malevolence and deceit of Hitler. Christians who busy themselves looking for the good in popular culture may fall prey to the "peace in our time" mentality.

The weaknesses in *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes* are more of degree than content. At one point, Myers says, "The main question raised by popular culture concerns the most edifying way to spend one's time" (p. 53). Moses, the man of God, said, "As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years ... and we fly away.... So teach us to number our days, that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:10-12). When our pilgrimage is so short, who has time to anesthetize his heart, soul, mind, and strength with the vacuity of popular culture? I regret that Myers did not make this point with repeated hammer strokes.

Still, *All God's Children and Blue Suede Shoes* is a remarkable book with a wealth of insight on how to live with popular culture. Short of living the life of a hermit in central Nevada, there is no way to escape popular culture. Moreover, if we are to raise godly seed among the generation of Beevis and that other guy, parents, pastors, teachers, police, and youth workers will have to study popular culture with all the intensity they bring to any other realm of thought. After all, children are the heritage of the Lord. May they continue to be born to nuclear families which raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!

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Endnotes:

- 1 *National Review*, May 30, 1994, 65.
- 2 "The Aesthetics of the Popular Arts," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Spring 1966, 356.
- 3 "Can Revival Come?" *Southern Seminary*, Winter 1994, 4.
- 4 *Overnight Sensation*, Munchkin Records, 1973.
- 5 Robert Pattison. *The Triumph of Vulgarity: Rock Music in the Mirror of Romanticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 9, as quoted in Myers, 137.
- 6 *Westminster Journal*, Fall 1991, 379.
- 7 For a more thorough discussion, see Gene Edward Veith's *State of the Arts: From Bezael to Mapplethorpe* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 222-27.

Portofino

Frank Schaeffer
New York, New York: MacMillan (1992).
248 pages, cloth, \$15.00.

Frank Schaeffer, son of the late Francis A. Schaeffer, has written articles, produced controversial newspapers, directed movies and lectured widely. Now he has written a full-length novel, published by a major New York publishing house, which gives the distinct impression that it is a reflection of experiences Schaeffer knows first hand.

Portofino is the story of a missionary family based in Switzerland. The story is told from the perspective of Calvin, who in the first part of the story is nearly eleven years of age, while in the second he is nearly fourteen. In both parts of the story (said to be 1962 and 1965) the family is on summer holiday in Italy, thus the name Portofino. The story involves Ralph, the father, an American Presbyterian missionary who is excessively melancholic and given to huge outbursts of anger; the mother, an aggressive evange-

listic type who frequently has simplistic pat answers for almost every question; two older sisters, Janet and Rachel, who are legalistic, conscientious and exceptionally mean to their little brother; and Calvin, a young lad who is engaged in self discovery throughout the novel. There is a very real sense in which the only emotionally healthy person in the entire story is Calvin, from whose perspective the story is narrated.

Calvin discovers his sexuality, faces puberty with the usual problems young boys encounter, and in general struggles with the excessive rigidity of his parents and sisters, whose faith and practice are almost always inconsistent with real life. While with his family, vacationing in Portofino, Calvin falls in love with the first girl he ever really cared for, Jennifer. She is a sensible, intelligent, non pietistic, Church of England girl. He also forms a secret friendship with an Italian artist who drinks heavily. Here he shares, with his friend, whiskey and water quite routinely. He is found out by his sister, who later tells on him. When his father beats him physically, in a parody of aggressive corporal punishment, the entire family is strangely brought closer together as they empathize with Calvin's pain.

The parents experience one marital struggle. Calvin discovers that his mother is getting very close to a full-blown affair with a young American missionary named Jonathan Edwards. Eventually the mother's relationship is exposed by a letter which is sent to Ralph. Dad leaves the family, only to return a few hours later. A time of hopeful recovery is on the horizon as the summer at Portofino ends.

Meanwhile, Calvin has discovered the mysteries of the Christian faith in the very religion which his parents oppose so completely—Roman Catholicism. He lights a candle to the Blessed Virgin Mary and finds Romanism quite interesting to his inquiring teenage heart. Throughout the story Calvin is found continually rejecting the stereotypical Re-

formed faith of his own family, first finding fault with his father's academic Calvinism and then with his mother's fundamentalist Pietism.

On the dust jacket the publisher describes this novel as being filled with "hilarious incidents." It is also said to be "sunny." I am not sure I agree. I found it both silly and sad. Silly in the sense that Schaeffer tries to tell a story which is neither good fiction nor interesting anecdote. I found myself unable to appreciate the purpose for which this story is told, unless you consider observing the emotional and sexual hang-ups of rigid fundamentalists interesting. Furthermore, I am not sure what to make of the denial (on the copyright page) of any similarity between real life characters, places and incidents and the famous family from which Frank Schaeffer himself comes. One who knows fundamentalism, its publishing houses, mission agencies, and American methods will not read this book without wondering, "Is Schaeffer trying to tell us something about his own life?" I wonder.

Frank Schaeffer's recent pilgrimage into Eastern Orthodoxy, attendant with his now well-known off-color language and passionate attacks on evangelicalism, makes for an even more interesting study in the light of this book. The reader must judge for himself. Either way, as with so much conservative Christian fiction, I find this novel neither good Christian thinking nor interesting fiction. I wish Christian writers would write fiction that was less self-consciously evangelical and more faithfully biblical in the old sense. Maybe then we could again have some exciting fiction that knew how to use the realities of faith in telling a story well.

Editor

The Body

Charles Colson
 Dallas, Texas: Word Books (1992).
 455 pages, cloth, \$19.99.

I was very confused! I had read 170 pages of *The Body* and Charles Colson had me totally confused. In the margin on page 170 I wrote, "Perhaps Colson is writing so much positive material about Roman Catholics in the hope that they will read his book and he will have an opportunity to evangelize them." After drawing me into the book with some wonderful stories and case studies concerning the church with which I entirely identified, Colson had begun to write about Roman Catholicism with so much vigor and joy that I had become baffled. In fact, the sheer volume of writing about Roman Catholics caused me to make some calculations. In the center section of his book, Colson glowed about Roman Catholicism on at least 50 percent of the pages! My second thought was much more frightening. "Perhaps Colson actually thinks that Roman Catholicism is an acceptable religion and ought to be considered part of the true body of Christ!" It was only a few days later that my fears were realized when Colson published his joint statement with Roman Catholics, "Evangelicals and Catholics Together." Needless to say, I felt more than a little sheepish about my naiveté. As it turns out, *The Body* is Colson's argument in favor of unifying evangelicals and Catholics as the true body of Christ.

I have always enjoyed Colson's writing and, in the main, *The Body* is no exception. He is a brilliant storyteller and his illustrations and case studies hold the reader's attention to the page. The final chapter, "Coram Deo," an account of the conversion of death row inmate Rusty Woomer, is worth the entire price of the book. There are a number of excellent

points in the book which I found to be very helpful.

Colson shines when he discusses matters such as the sellout of the American church to American culture. He observes correctly that the church in America is very comfortable with its surrounding culture and seemingly unwilling to do much to try to transform that culture. He recognizes the "radical individualism" of evangelicals, perhaps one of the most difficult problems a pastor has to deal with in his congregation. He writes, "To bring hope and truth to a needy world, the church must be the church" (p. 32).

To his credit, Colson identifies four dangerous consequences which threaten the American church when it sells itself out to consumerism and marketing. He cautions us to make sure that we have our priorities in line. He reminds us, "What we do, therefore, flows from who we are" (p. 281). In a day in which evangelicals are so caught up with making all kinds of declarations about Christianity by marching, boycotting, and demonstrating, the message that we had better make sure that there is something of substance to our profession of faith is one of the most important messages that we can hear.

Colson is at his best when he limits himself to discussing the relation of the church to society. When he challenges us to a biblical worldview as opposed to relativism and secularism he argues an excellent case which is very helpful. He gives some wonderful examples of churches that are having a very positive impact on their neighborhoods for the sake of the kingdom of Christ.

However, when Colson begins to argue in favor of the unification of evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism his logic and his theology begin to show some serious signs of shallowness. He clearly has an agenda, and in his effort to accomplish his goal he smiles far too benignly on Romanism. It is apparent Colson has been so impressed with some

people in the renewal movement within Romanism that he is willing to make a number of compromises in order to make sure that they can stay in Roman Catholicism and still be considered an integral part of the body of Christ.

Colson makes an impassioned plea for unity (pp. 102-104) which makes one wonder. "Without unity, evangelism is frustrated." He presents the argument that the world will not see the truth as long we remain divided. The biblical proclamation of the gospel has never been seriously hindered by the separation of the Reformed believers from the Romanists, especially in Roman Catholic countries! A missionary from Argentina was recently speaking to our fellowship and the idea of working together with Roman Catholics struck him as particularly ludicrous. How could they accurately present the gospel message if they had to cooperate with Catholics?

Again, when Colson tries to lay down the basis for unity and cites a set of "core beliefs" upon which we can all agree, the fundamental doctrine of justification by grace through faith alone is glaringly absent. The issue of justification was one of the battlegrounds of the Reformation and to ignore it as one of the "core beliefs" necessary to unity is incredible!

Colson notes four characteristics of the community which is called the church: fellowship, administration of ordinances/sacraments, prayer and worship, and the supernatural endowment of the Holy Spirit. His treatment of both baptism and the Lord's Supper is so simplistic that it is all but useless. Of course, it has to be simplistic. Any discussion of the *meaning* of these ordinances would make unification of evangelicals and Romanists impossible. Would the first century church accept the Vatican view of the sacraments as orthodox? I think not! What about the spiritual gifts, lay ministry, etc.? Granted, the renewal movement within Romanism may have taken some significant

steps in this area, but we are far from being able to have fellowship based on the unity of our view of the work of the Holy Spirit!

Colson defends Catholicism by pointing to the many changes which have taken place since the Reformation. He happily declares that the practice of selling indulgences which was attacked by the Reformers no longer exists! If this is true, why then did several of our Roman Catholic relatives and friends pay for masses to be said for my wife several years ago when she was very ill? And perhaps Vatican II has softened Trent's statements about salvation being available only through the Catholic church. Apparently Romanism has softened so much that I recently saw a monsignor defend the salvation of Hindus and Buddhists on the basis of their sincerity! With what kind of Roman Catholicism does Colson want us to unite?

The friend who gave me *The Body* for Christmas a couple of years ago wrote on the title page, "Chuck lays out scriptural injunctions for the church. This may well be his best writing yet." This is what concerns me. How many evangelicals will be blindly led into "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" because of their confidence in Charles Colson? Good writing can lure a careless reader into the trap. My warning to the people in my fellowship has been that if they want to read *The Body*, they should do so with Bible and notebook at hand. The efforts at the unification of evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism have tipped Colson's hand. There is a very dangerous agenda on the table.

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Great Divides

Ronald H. Nash

Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress (1993).

240 pages, paperback, \$10.00.

In 1979 Robert K. Johnston informed us about *Evangelicals at an Impasse* (John Knox) over the nature of biblical authority and its application to contemporary social and cultural mores. Ten years later Erwin Lutzer gave us an informative look at some of the doctrinal issues that separate professing Christians in *All One Body—Why Don't We Agree?* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1989).

Now, Reformed Theological Seminary professor Ronald H. Nash brings his theological and analytical skills to bear on ten more controversies that bring evangelicals to an impasse and cause professing Christians to disagree. "These are great divides that can hurt relationships and cause people . . . emotional turmoil and even lost fellowship" (8). As in earlier works mentioned, Ronald Nash wants to apply biblical authority to the issues he covers. He desires to help evangelicals see Christ in every aspect of their lives.

The hotly debated topics Nash examines are the pro-life movement, the place of women in the church, radical feminism, divorce and remarriage, psychology and counseling, the health-and-wealth gospel, Christian involvement in politics, Christian reconstruction, lordship salvation, and the end times. One chapter covers each issue. Nash carefully sketches the major positions Christians and some non-Christians take on each issue, then he skillfully and fairly evaluates each position, telling us along the way which position he favors and why. Nash is not hesitant to point out which positions fall outside the scope for evangelical Christianity. His own commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture is rock-solid. When he examines the presupp-

sitions of some "evangelical feminists" in the controversy over women leaders in the church he says:

One central, nonnegotiable essential of evangelicalism is its high view of Scripture and its conviction that the Bible is without error. The evangelical feminists make it clear that they have abandoned this nonnegotiable doctrine. It's important to understand their view; but they leave us with a key question: How can we continue to regard them as evangelicals (47)?

Even as Nash is pointing out those that clearly contradict Christian faith he is able to distinguish between theological mountains and molehills. He is quick to recognize issues that should not be divisive, since those on each side of the disagreement should be considered orthodox. He is careful to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" wherever possible. On some issues such as the end times, Nash maintains it is possible to disagree heartily with someone and still maintain fellowship. I was disappointed, however, that Nash discusses postmillennialism, amillennialism and dispensational premillennialism. The reader is left with the impression that there are only three main schools of thought in evangelicalism. George Eldon Ladd's book, *The Blessed Hope*, is listed in an endnote along with other books on eschatology for further study, but the chapter seems out of balance without at least some discussion of this fourth school of thought.

Another strength of Nash's book is the great amount of material he has distilled for the reader. He is familiar with the primary source material. He understands the presuppositions and tenets of each position he reviews. He never resorts to caricatures or straw men in his argument. The book is an excellent example of clear, concise thinking and fair argumentation. Not everyone will agree with his conclusions, although most of our readers probably will. For

example, the author is not hesitant to explain why he disagrees with the politics of the religious left, why he is not a reconstructionist, and why lordship salvation is the true message of the gospel. Some may feel that he is too easy on psychology and psychologists in the chapter on psychology and counseling. But the author is always fair in how he treats those with whom he disagrees.

This is a book that will be very helpful to busy pastors who want a basic understanding of where the battle lines are, and the positions that are friend or foe to biblical Christianity. It is a book a pastor can recommend to people with confidence. It will also be helpful to any concerned Christian who wants to begin to understand the issues confronting evangelical Christianity in the 1990s, and to decide what his or her own position in the debate will be. This book will help believers understand what the issues are, and *why* we should be concerned about them. It would make an excellent companion to Lutzer's book mentioned earlier.

The strength of the book is also its main weakness. Its treatment of each issue is very brief. Often I wished for more information and deeper analysis. For those who wish to go deeper the endnotes are helpful in directing the reader to good sources.

Ten years from now, if evangelicalism is still around, there will probably still be great divides to confront. Nash has given us a good guide to the ones we face today. If Christians begin to think clearly and biblically on these issues, as he urges us to do, perhaps the issues of the future can be different ones.

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Historical Criticism of the Bible

Eta Linnemann

Robert W. Yarbrough, Translator

Grand Rapids: Baker Book House (1990).

169 pages, paperback, \$9.99.

Dr. Linnemann's book is subtitled "Reflections of a Bultmannian Turned Evangelical," and herein lies the genius of the book. Cogent reflections from an insider in any field are especially helpful in engendering insight into nuances of that field's body of knowledge which often escape even careful analysis by an outsider. Arthur Eddington did this in *The Nature of the Physical World* (1928), his seminal analysis of physics, particularly of the theories of Schrodinger and Einstein, written for the literate laity. And more recently (1993) Leon Lederman and Dick Teresi did somewhat the same service in the same field in *The God Particle*. Other examples could be cited from various fields. These are mentioned because they will be cited below.

Linnemann was not only an insider, she was a highly placed insider, making her book all the more valuable. As Robert W. Yarbrough, her translator, says, "She was a diligent and receptive student of some of this century's truly seminal thinkers in German New Testament Scholarship: Bultman, Fuchs, Gogarten, and Ebeling. Later, inducted into the world's most prestigious professional society for New Testament research, she was the peer of many others of like stature" (p. 7).

The book is written on an accessible level, readable and understandable by a wide variety of people, and not limited to academic circles. Quoting the translator again, "Quite deliberately Linnemann is *not* writing a formal academic treatise as such, but rather a *Bubruf*—a call to repentance" (p. 9).

She presents a trenchant combination of scholarly understanding together with calls to repentance reminiscent of Jesus and Paul in both their warmth and in their heat. She strikes a skillful balance between these elements, and the result is a substantive and penetrating analysis of non-Christian thought in all its forms. She is particularly good at unmasking unsubstantiated theory masquerading as fact and science.

A read-through and study of this book would be a helpful antidote for those who are attending secular colleges or who are about to engage in secular studies, since it attacks the presumptions of liberal theology, philosophy, and science—all in the scope of one readable volume. Collateral reading would build on the solid foundation she lays in this miniature tome.

In her introduction she sets the stage for the rest of the work with the words, “Today I realize that historical-critical theology’s monopolistic character and world-wide influence is a sign of God’s judgment (Rom. 1:18-32) ... (2 Tim. 4:3) ... (2 Thess. 2:11)” (p. 18).

She begins (p. 23) with a criticism of the university, which she traces in its roots to paganism and in its revival in the twelfth century to the same source. Both law and philosophy were studied from the pagan standpoint (Justinian and Aristotle, respectively), and Scholasticism attempted to harmonize faith with these pagan influences. This conflict led to an insistence by the university on autonomy, a humanistic stance making man, rather than God and His Word, the measure of all things while maintaining an outward piety. As Linnemann says, “Humanism, therefore, attributes the status of truth to every product whatsoever of human thought and creativity” (p. 27). It therefore has metaphysical dimensions. This is, in effect, a claim that truth is monistic in nature—limited to the human and the finite and always the same regardless of its source.

Later in her book Linnemann says that (for the followers of the Enlightenment)

Everything that appears to conform to the laws of logic is automatically correct and reliable, insofar as it restricts itself monistically to what is visible and immanent. This conviction of neutrality, objectivity, and the universality of scientific thought is championed in the university, where it is assumed that true “thinking” must be “scientifically based,” and so limited to these monistic self-restrictions. In other words, the sciences which can be studied in the university, each in their respective domains, lay a claim to exclusive validity for human thought (p. 40).

On page 64 she makes it plain that “disciplined, scientifically regulated thought” is necessary, but by excluding God from the process it wanders from the truth. This opinion is in line with the thoughts of Calvin, Beza, Luther and others in the Reformation era. Calvin founded an academy and Beza joined him in dedicating it to the glory of God as a countermeasure to the Greek ideals of education, and Luther said that “Every institution in which men are not constantly occupied with the Word of God must be corrupt.”¹¹

We find similar thoughts in both the evidential and the presuppositional camps in our day. Though they differ in their starting points and in various elements of methodology, both insist that a system of knowledge uninformed by Christian thinking is inadequate.

Van Til, perhaps the leading presuppositionalist apologist of our time, writes:

Christianity claims to furnish the presuppositions without which a true scientific procedure is unintelligible. Chief of these presuppositions is the idea of God as expressed in the doctrine of the ontological Trinity. In addition there are the doctrines of creation, of providence, and of God’s ultimate plan with the universe. Christianity claims that the very aim

and method of science require these doctrines as their prerequisites. ... In spite of this claim to neutrality on the part of the non-Christian the Reformed apologist must point out that *every* method, the supposedly neutral one no less than any other, presupposes either the truth or the falsity of Christian theism. ... But he [the Reformed apologist] should [show that his opponent's method] not merely leads away from Christian theism but in leading away from Christian theism leads to destruction of reason and science as well.²

Evidentialist Robert C. Newman, citing Hume's argument against miracles, writes:

Epistemologically, Hume claims that natural law is established by "firm and unalterable experience." Clearly, something we call *natural law* exists. There are many real advantages to discovering and using such laws, as our modern technology attests. But in saying these laws are established by "unalterable experience," Hume extrapolates far beyond anything our limited observations can establish. At most, we can only list all events which we have actually observed, not those which have happened but were not observed, nor those which could happen but so far have not. Thus our natural laws are not based on a complete induction, but only upon a subset of observations which are quite limited both in space and time. Within the subset of events known to mankind there are many reports of miraculous events. So even if we define miracle as a violation of natural law, we only know that natural law is established by "firm" experience if in fact all these reports of miracles are actually false. This we do not know, as no one has investigated each of these reports and found them to be false. Hume thus begs the question by importing his conclusion into his premises.³

Science, however, is not monolithically committed to Hume's philosophical position. Lederman and Teresi admit that "Among the subset of humans called scientists, there are atheists, agnostics, the militantly apathetic, the deeply religious, and those who view the creator as a personal deity,

either all-wise or somewhat bumbling, like Frank Morgan in the Wizard of Oz,"⁴

Eddington, while not espousing a Christian position, is far more definitive in his comments than Lederman and Teresi. He says, "In so far as supernaturalism is associated with the denial of strict causality I can only answer that this is what the modern scientific development of the quantum theory brings us to."⁵

Earlier in the quoted work he says: "The idea of a universal Mind or Logos would be, I think, a fairly plausible inference from the present state of scientific theory; at least it is in harmony with it. But if so, all that our inquiry justifies us in asserting is a purely colourless pantheism."⁶ He gives a further caution along these lines: "I repudiate the idea of proving the distinctive beliefs of religion either from the data of physical science or by the methods of physical science."⁷

Nevertheless, Eddington adds:

In the mystic sense of the creation around us, in the expression of art, in a yearning towards God, the soul grows upward and finds the fulfillment of something implanted in its nature. The sanction for this development is within us, a striving born with our consciousness or Inner Light proceeding from a greater power than ours. Science can scarcely question this sanction, for the pursuit of science springs from a striving which the mind is impelled to follow, a questioning that will not be suppressed."⁸ This "something" is known in the Scripture as "the image of God," and Paul refers to it as "the truth" which is suppressed from within and perverted without (Rom. 1:18-32).

In many cases this suppression is often aided by the practices of the humanistic community. In a very insightful comment Linnemann says, "But it must be noted that the systems relied on by science and culture have, under humanistic premises, no real basis, but are grounded in nothing more than arrangements and agreements" (p. 27). This is

echoed by Eddington who says, "Much of the apparent uniformity of nature is a uniformity of averages."⁹

Eddington makes several other statements along the same lines. He says, for instance, "There is a definitely selective action of the mind."¹⁰ Also, "The external world of physics is thus a symposium of the worlds presented to different viewpoints."¹¹ In a similar vein he says, "The great laws hitherto accepted as causal appear on minute examination to be of statistical character."¹²

In drawing out the implications of these statements, Eddington says, "Scientific investigation does not lead to knowledge of the intrinsic nature of things." Instead "whenever we state the properties of a body in terms of physical quantities we are imparting knowledge of the response of various metrical indicators to its presence and nothing more."¹³ Furthermore, "a rather serious consequence of dropping causality in the external world is that it leaves us with no clear distinction between the Natural and the Supernatural."¹⁴ Thus, "We have acknowledged that the entities of physics can from their very nature form only a partial aspect of the reality.... Feelings, purpose, values, make up our consciousness as much as sense-impressions."¹⁵

In spite of such admissions of subjectivity even by leading minds in the scientific community, science (or scientism, or the philosophy of science) since Bacon has generally relegated matters of faith to the subjective realm and arrogated to itself "objectivity." Bacon, for instance, "defined faith as *sacrificium intellectus*, the surrender of the attempt to understand" (Linnemann, op. cit, p. 29).

"Hobbes, who likewise made a radical separation between faith and thought, relegated matters of faith to the unverifiable, paradoxical realm of absurdities and contradictions" (p. 29).

Such ideas had an effect not only on the scientific community but in other important realms as well. Linnemann sketches

the effect of these ideas on philosophers and authors such as Spinoza, Descartes, Kant, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, Herder, Hegel, Marx, and Engels. Through their influence the concept of God became first superfluous, then was eliminated altogether, resulting in an atheistic science, philosophy, religion, and art.

A substitute for God arose. "*Sapere aude!* [Dare to be wise!] Have the courage to rely on your own understanding!" was the motto of the Enlightenment (p. 35). It became a false god.

On pages 46-48 she traces the development of such trends in the West since the Middle Ages, and gives seven stages of entrenchment, which she parallels to the Northern apostasy in Israel. The stages might be paraphrased as instigation, institutionalization, pressure to conform, guidance by self-interest, monopoly, perceptual or epistemological distortion, and condemnation by God. In other words, the ideas began as a school of thought which became self-reinforcing and were eventually able to gain a monopolistic hold on a substantial portion of society, but these ideas are condemned by God.

On subsequent pages she intersperses into her analysis remedial suggestions directed particularly to evangelicals.

Besides these epistemological considerations she also shows the devastating effect of certain attitudes, one of which is "dissent," which, as it works its influence in the various humanistic thought systems, causes "scattering and fragmentation" (p. 28) in these systems. Dissent is both an ideal and a (supposed) means to truth in humanistic systems. As she presents it, it appears to be a quasi-premise working subliminally or nearly so and bringing devastating influences into what should be well-ordered thought systems.

Another such attitude is the quest for prestige. "In humanism truth is replaced by recognition, a prestige wrapped up in the conferring and accepting of honor. This enterprise is, without doubt, subject to manipulation" (p. 28).

A third attitude is traditionalism. On page 105 Dr.

Linnemann says that in every scientific discipline a “complex of traditions regulates the entire scope of scientific work within the discipline. New scientific knowledge can only surface if it is closely linked with the complex of traditions.” She further states: “In theory scientific thought is autonomous and recognizes no limitation. ‘The independence of science’ and ‘academic freedom’ are generally recognized as justified demands. In practice this freedom exists only within the complexes of traditions which are in place in each of the various subjects and disciplines” (p. 106). Thus, what began as an attempt at independence of thought led to a largely unrecognized dependence on and conformity to a scientific/philosophical traditionalism.

A fourth attitude is reliance on intuition. For instance, “The late-dating of the so-called priestly writing is, in the words of the theory’s mastermind, E. Reuss (1804-91), ‘the product of intuition’” [Samuel R. Kulling, *Zur Datierung der ‘Genesis-P-Stücke’* (2nd ed., Riehen, 1985) 5]. Reuss passes this intuition on immediately to his students in the easily remembered statement: “The prophets are earlier than the law, and the Psalms more recent than both” (p. 130).

Graf, a student of Reuss, accepted this formula and developed further theories about Israel’s history on the basis of it. Other layers of theory were built up on these by Wellhausen and other scholars, all without proof. The arguments used to support these theories “consist entirely of unproven assertions and judgments based on personal taste” (p. 131).

Such intuitional thinking was not limited to theological circles. It also found its way into the hard sciences. Charles Lyell, founder of modern geology, felt that the idea of God’s involvement in geological formation was a premise he could not accept. Darwin likewise could not accept the idea that all living things came from God. He used Lyell’s idea of an old earth to postulate what he thought was an adequate

time frame for the development of one species from one another. To this he added the idea of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest which he got, not from scientific considerations, but from a sociological essay on overpopulation by Thomas Robert Malthus. Of course, Darwin also quoted Herbert Spencer as a supporter of this idea,¹⁶ and the concept can be found in Lucretius (c. 94-55 B. C.),¹⁷ Empedocles (c. 495-435 B. C.),¹⁸ and others; but Dr. Lennemann’s point is that this is primarily a philosophical (a priori) idea rather than one derived by an inductive examination of compelling facts (a posteriori).

It should be emphasized that Lyell and Darwin did not simply stumble into these intuitions while the rest of their ideas remained untouched by such influences. This intuitional thinking is a pervasive influence. Hendrik G. Stoker puts it this way:

For instance, evolutionism confronts us with a host of facts concerning accidental—genetic and mutational as well as ontogenetic and phylogenetic—variations, phenotypes and genotypes, analogies, sequences of strata, fossils, and so on, but yet it presupposes, for instance, autonomy of thought, a positivistic (even if neo-positivistic) conception of facts, a universal dynamic continuity of causes, a right to universal generalization and extrapolation and that nature must be wholly explicable by nature alone. These presuppositions cannot be proved scientifically, but without them evolutionism falls to pieces; and evolutionism must appear to him who does not accept these presuppositions to be a grand speculation virtually comparable to the speculative system of Hegel. These presuppositions exclude, from the start, our (biblically founded) Christian presuppositions; they are not neutral and form what you would call a “negative universal.”¹⁹

Two additional “attitudes” are evident: loyalty to schools of thought and, closely allied to this, group dynamics (see pp. 135-37). The desire to be faithful to what one considers

the truth is a compelling human motivation; often it is a supra-rational force. Group dynamics reinforce this drive. Shared convictions are self-reinforcing. "What is 'scientific' is decided, rightly or wrongly, by what has established itself in the general consciousness of science" (p. 159).

Her conclusion on these matters is the following: "When I take from God's Word what seems good to me and depend on my human reason to assemble a god in the image of my own limited insight, is this not idolatry?" (p. 151).

Scott Souza

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End Notes:

- 1 Larry Woiwode. "Beth-el: Our Bias Is the House of God," *The Bias Report*, January 1994, 6.1.13.
- 2 Cornelius Van Til. *Apologetics*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, 1971), 24, 62-63.
- 3 John Warwick Montgomery (ed.) *Evidence for Faith: Deciding the Good Question*. Section 5.3: "Miracles and the Historicity of the Easter Week Narratives," Robert C. Newman (Probe Books: Dallas, 1991), 277.
- 4 Leon Lederman with Dick Teresi. *The God Particle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993), 406.
- 5 A. S. Eddington. *The Nature of the Physical World*. The Gifford Lectures 1927. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), 347.
- 6 Ibid, 338.
- 7 Ibid, 333.
- 8 Ibid, 327-28.
- 9 Ibid, 244.
- 10 Ibid, 264.
- 11 Ibid, 284.
- 12 Ibid, 298
- 13 Ibid, 303.
- 14 Ibid, 309.

15 Ibid, 323.

16 Charles Darwin. *The Origin of Species* (New York: New American Library, 1958), 74.

17 Will and Ariel Durant. *The Story of Civilization, Volume III: Caesar and Christ*, Will Durant (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966), 151.

18 Ibid., Volume II: *The Life of Greece*, Will Durant, 365.

19 E. R. Geehan. *Jerusalem and Athens*. Hendrik G. Stoker, "Reconnoitering the Theory of Knowledge of Prof. Dr. Cornelius Van Til" (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), 35.