

Reviews

Science, Secularization, and God: Toward a Theology of the Future. By KENNETH CAUTHEN. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1969. 237 pages. \$5.50

This excellent volume strengthens contemporary Christian theology by a responsible examination of the findings of the sciences and of the implications of secularization. The purpose of the book is "to investigate the relationship of a biblically grounded religion to the science-dominated, secularized culture of our time, in pursuit of the thesis that it is possible to be both 'a serious Christian and an intelligent modern'" (p. 14).

The author is professor of theology at Crozer Theological Seminary. He has written *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (1962) and was chosen as the first full-time postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies in Theology and the Sciences at Meadville/Lombard Theological School.

Mr. Cauthen is clearly a Christian theologian, but he is courageous and intellectually honest in his examination of these two major challenges to the truth and the relevance of the Christian message in the contemporary world. His work deserves the serious attention of both theologians and scientists, for he succeeds in many respects in maintaining his thesis.

Since the author has been careful in forming his definitions, he avoids numerous pitfalls into which other writers have fallen. This is clear in the first chapter, which confronts the challenges of science and secularization, and in the valuable, methodological second chapter, which distinguishes and relates the areas of science, philosophy, and theology. His care is shown by the fact that he avoids the serious error, which other theologians frequently make, of confusing science with technology. Thus, according to Professor Cauthen, science "may be defined as a search for knowledge of the way things are which aims at generalizations based at crucial points on observations" (p. 53). Secularization "is that process in our civilization by which 'human existence comes to be determined by the dimension of time and history' (Gogarten)" (p. 32). This is to be distinguished from secularism, which "can be defined as a way of living in which all appeals to anything beyond the horizon of human history are completely rejected" (ibid.).

His earlier volume was primarily historical in nature; this volume is explicitly devoted to constructive theology. He undertakes his constructive task in relation to the problem of purpose in an evolutionary perspective.

Cauthen has been significantly influenced in his thinking by the works of Alfred North Whitehead, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and Samuel Alexander. Michael Polanyi, George Gaylord Simpson, and W. H. Waddington are representatives of the synthetic views of evolution which he confronts. He recognizes the strength of the positions taken by those who deny that an interpretation of the evolutionary process should include such categories as the presence of "subjective enjoyment of value" or "an inner reality" (pp. 121-22).

It is significant, however, that he leaves, quite appropriately, certain technical questions to be settled by the physicists, the biologists, and the mathematicians. Thus he notes that Errol Harris maintains, and G. G. Simpson denies, that "to account for life, therefore, we need, in addition to known physiochemical laws, 'some different principle,' some sort of 'radial energy,' some *nisus* to order and wholeness which can transcend thermodynamics" (p. 122).

Cauthen's concern is not to decide between these two men, but rather, to explore Simpson's own position which, he says, really begs the entire question at hand. His own careful treatment of an organismic understanding of the nature of the universe (p. 125) stresses the theme of continuities of structure: "To put it more succinctly, I am taking as a basic presupposition that human existence epitomizes the inner and outer nature of events and that man's emergence is simply the consummation of potentialities, processes, and purposes built into the very structure of reality at its primordial base in the space-time continuum itself."

From this perspective he moves, in the following chapters, to a consideration of the problems of God and of Christology. His analysis of "the three-fold root of the doctrine of God" presents a valuable, constructive, theological statement. One should note the dual perspective from which he approaches the question of God, for this perspective strengthens the importance of this constructive statement. On the one hand, Cauthen clearly presents a Christian witness within the following framework (p. 140): "Any theologian who explicitly makes the abiding religious essence of the biblical documents the norm of his convictions is by formal definition a Christian theologian, regardless of the inadequacy of the material content of his outlook. Any religious thinker may be said to be a Christian theologian in the material sense to the extent to which his point of view actually reflects the themes of the biblical witness, regardless of whether or not he consciously represents himself as giving allegiance to the Bible as a criterion in the formal sense."

On the other hand, his examination of the problems involved in affirming a doctrine of God manifests both humility and a radical acceptance of whatever truths the sciences may disclose. He cannot accept the interpretations of divine perfection that are presented by Charles Hartshorne, Schubert Ogden, or Paul Tillich. He is led, thus, to affirm a view of God as Imperfect Primordial Becoming (p. 170): "My suggestion, made in fear and trembling, is that we consider the possibility of grounding not only the being and goodness of finite existence but also the equally real sense of the ambiguity of life in the primordial being of God." He goes much further (cf. pp. 187-88): "I find it questionable that God has been, throughout an infinite past, a fully actual, perfect, conscious, all-knowing being. This implies that I must take it as an ultimate possibility that God, like all organisms, may die, relapsing permanently or temporarily into the primordial but to us unknown ground from which the presently actual God-world has emerged. . . . If a theory of a world in perpetual expansion and contraction should ever be firmly established, it would seem necessary to speak at least of the ebb and flow of God, who as consequent moves through a series of 'lives.'"

This dual perspective of a Christian witness combined with a humility before facts as the sciences disclose them also characterizes his interpretation of Christology as "the clarification of creation and consummation" (p. 211). "The essential message is that in Jesus of Nazareth there is to be found a clarifica-

tion of the pattern and purpose of the divine activity" (p. 203). Caughen combines this primary emphasis on Christology as clarification with an acknowledgment that a doctrine of the work of Christ includes both the affirmation that Christ revealed something and that he accomplished something: "Saving power has been mediated to man and has been effective in the lives of believers and unbelievers alike. . . . A new possibility of experiencing and understanding human existence has been mediated through Jesus of Nazareth. In this sense Jesus has accomplished a work in history which has had immense consequences for the life of man on this planet" (p. 220).

The book points, as the author says, toward a theology of the future. Those who are concerned for the relationship of the sciences to theology can only welcome this valuable constructive statement. A professional theologian who writes with a sophisticated understanding of the sciences must, finally, speak from a position of humble witness. The theologian may be a Christian, a Muslim, a Hindu, or he may be of another persuasion. The central question for that theologian is that he be willing, in the name of faith, to place his present hopes and his best thoughts upon the altar of truth, for then the scientist can, from his own perspective, join him in the search for a fuller understanding of the sacred reality within which we live. The author has surely done this. We can only urge him to pursue his inquiry in relationship to other, significant aspects of Christian theology. Both his readers and the subsequent history of Christian thought should gain thereby.

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Teilhard de Chardin. By BERNARD TOWERS. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1966. 45 pages. \$1.25.

There are many fifty-page booklets which give a brief summary of Teilhard de Chardin's system, but this is the best of all, written by the chairman of the Pierre Teilhard de Chardin Association of Great Britain and Ireland. It is one of the slim volumes of the Makers of Theology series, and the author admits that Teilhard could not be included as a representative of "contemporary theology" insofar as this latter is pessimistic and existentialist. On the other hand, when this "new theology" has passed out of fashion, Teilhard will come into his own, as he has set a pattern which has won the respect of men of science, process philosophers, and exponents of "natural theology" and offers fresh insight into the old mystical quest. Towers states that Teilhard is *sui generis* and that he is the "maker of the theology of the future." Yet the author is aware that great harm has been done by enthusiasts of "Teilhardism" (as he described it in an address to the American Teilhard de Chardin Association in April 1969) who think that his system is a new and closed revelation surpassing all others and solving all problems. Teilhard should not be judged from merely one or two books or on brief essays from an early stage of his career, but on his total corpus, which is being increasingly published all over the world. Then he will be observed to have reinterpreted all Christian doctrines in terms of "cosmogogenesis," of which scientific evolution is an integral part. Teilhard has begun the real work of "building the earth," a task in which

men of science, religionists, and social reformers can collaborate, avoiding hasty condemnations and heady enthusiasms in that cosmic perspective which Teilhard "knew" so well.

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Isaac Newton als Theologe: Ein Beitrag zum Gespräch zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Theologie. By KLAUS-DIETWARDT BUCHHOLTZ. Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1965. 128 pages. DM. 18.

The struggle to retain teleology as an intrinsic or necessary category of scientific explanation has, for the most part, become uninteresting. An exception, of course, is the interest in Whiteheadian metaphysics on the part of American theologians, but most scientists (even Teilhard de Chardin) seem to be getting along quite well without actually bringing teleology into the laboratory. No doubt the cause can be directly traced to the triumphal procession of evolutionary theory, which, in the process of establishing itself, inadvertently but severely challenged the argument from design so popular with post-Newtonian theologians. Even Barth and Brunner agreed that man cannot reason from nature to God; man first encounters God in Jesus Christ. Their debate, of course, came after this encounter: can man even then recognize God in nature? It would certainly be understating the case to say that twentieth-century existential theology has failed to emphasize the need to answer that question in the affirmative.

For his part Buchholtz applauds the separation of science from theology. But he emphasizes that modern science arose in a specifically western and Christian context. His attempt is to show that Newton's work occupies a special place in that context, with the result that "we can hope that Newton's work, being that of a natural scientist and theologian, comprises for us the model for ordering physics and theology, provided that we see ourselves linked to Western-Christian history" (p. 14).

In the typically German academic style, Buchholtz's work is well outlined, including sections on the philosophical-scientific work, the theological-historical work, relations between these two, and an evaluation of Newton's place in history and his significance for the present. One would do better to consult other works on Newton's scientific endeavors; in fact, the author's later discussions demand that the reader be more acquainted with Newton's mechanics, mathematics, chemistry, optics, and especially philosophical presuppositions than Buchholtz's short summaries of them could possibly allow.

Newton the theologian is portrayed as an innovator. The implication is clear that his theological results were as important for him as his scientific achievements. With the dawning of a new age for science, he believed that a new era for theology had also become imperative. Whereas Newton cast his natural philosophy on a mathematical stage, Buchholtz holds that Newton chose history to help him play out the theological drama. Yet Newton had no desire to publish his religious thought; anything that reached the presses did so against his wishes. But then Newton was no reformer. He disliked opening himself up for criticism in any area, especially religion.

The by now well-known antitrinitarian tendencies of this great scientist may serve as an illustration. As a textual critic, his skill rivals that of modern research (e.g., his text for 1 John 5:7 agrees with Nestle but not with the King James version of 1611). Buchholtz sees the questioning of Greek metaphysics at work both in the overthrow of Aristotelianism in science and in Newton's reformulation of christology. He locates Newton within one of two traditions of Italian heretics of the sixteenth century as these traditions are found in the work of Delio Cantimori (*Italienische Häretiker der Spätrenaissance* [1949]). Cantimori identifies the first heretical tradition as those who had abandoned the historical emphasis on creed and the customary, fixed body of dogma in favor of elements of an abstract intellectualism. (One is reminded of Bruno.) Quoting Cantimori, Buchholtz says: "In the other mainstream such elements remain "subordinated to Christian asceticism and the religious instinct for the will of God, yet the motives proper to historical Christianity continue to stand in the foreground, in spite of exegetical rationalism and the predominance of intellectual elements" (p. 64). To this he comments that it is perfectly clear "that Newton with his theological pronouncements belongs in this second main stream," and that "there can be identified virtually nothing in his writings that could not find an explanation here." Nevertheless: "The emphasis of the religious instinct for the will of God and for the simple historical foundations of Christianity demonstrate clearly enough that Newton had nothing to do with the *radical* heretics. . . . Rather, the dogmatic form of the tradition of the Christian Faith was for him "question-able" (frag-würdig) in the truest sense of the word. Thus, his method of investigation did not openly avoid adopting concepts and methods from heretical circles" (pp. 64-65; italics mine).

Buchholtz suggests that Newton's anti-Catholic and antipapal prejudice may be at work here. Not only in this instance but in other places as well Buchholtz supposes that Sir Isaac's usual method of investigation, one based on an impartial historical judgment, has been subordinated to either Newton's own predispositions or those he has adopted from his time. For example, Newton believed that humanity had been unified before the Tower of Babel according to the common interpretation of the Genesis. He concluded, therefore, that all races had at one time been instructed in the one, true religion as revealed in the two great commandments. This instruction had come first of all through Noah and his followers, and had been continued through Socrates, Cicero, and Confucius to the heathens, through Moses and the prophets to Israel, and through Christ and the apostles to Christians. Speaking of this idea of the original unity of humanity, Buchholtz comments:

Since the historical work of the present and previous centuries, this theory, which again and again comes to the fore in the ecclesiastical description of history, can be once and for all laid aside. Yet the other proposition, that in the beginning there was a plurality from which mainstreams formed, streams of which only one supplanted all others, presents its own peculiar difficulties to the dogmatician. We see here Newton caught by the idea that in the beginning there was unity, a clear indication that he had subordinated his historical investigation to dogmatic presuppositions. [Pp. 31-32]

Similar judgments are suggested with regard to Newton's sympathy toward the Eastern church concerning christology, and his negative position on the existing doctrine of the church in general. The question one would like to put to

Buchholtz is: what result *should* he have come to if he had not suppressed his historical investigations? Surely the author does not expect him to live up to later standards.

Buchholtz exhibits considerable originality in dealing with Newton's prophetic concerns. He correlates the great scientist's hermeneutic (let scripture interpret scripture) with his methodology in alchemy. As exact chemistry interprets the symbols of alchemy without destroying its symbolic nature, so history enables one to interpret prophecy (which, needless to say, is closed). At times the parallels may be a bit overdrawn, but in general the similarities are obvious.

Finally, Buchholtz considers Newton's integration of science and religion. Leibniz had objected that an omnipotent God would not create a world system in which his presence was constantly required. Newton replied by defining God's sovereignty with respect to his servants, thereby recognizing, according to Buchholtz, that "right talk about God always involves talk about men" (p. 69). This is the one place, claims the writer, where Newton breaks through the deistic form of his several arguments against atheism.

The notion of the sensorium as the instrument of direct perception was not foreign to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The organs of sense do not enable the soul to perceive things; they merely convey them to the sensorium. Newton described absolute space as God's sensorium, since God has no need for sense organs but perceives all things everywhere in an immediate manner. Although Newton had formally separated the doing of science from the practice of religion, he apparently was guilty here, as he was in optics and mechanics, of feigning hypotheses. But guilty is the wrong word, according to Buchholtz. It is rather an attempt to remain under the judgment of empiricism and logic, and yet to hazard a pronouncement concerning that which is not captured by common experience. Such a stance is what the author labels "knowledge of the world on the basis of faith." The task of modern theologians is similar. Modern man has no time to engage in formulating a complete systematic theology or apologetic. His task is "to reflect anew what faith in the triune God has to contribute to knowledge of this world, including that which is apprehended empirically" (p. 91). Such a position may produce what the Godless system of Laplace would call superficial hypotheses: "Nevertheless, the believing man of research, seeing himself limited by his field of endeavor to purely empirico-logical relationships, will again and again risk such assertions of faith with all necessary care; and when he does it, he can view himself as a follower of Newton" (p. 92).

Buchholtz has a point. Put another way, which of us can divorce the immense curiosity and the driving mystery embedded in mankind's religious dimensions from the origin, development, and also future progress of science in general, and models in particular?

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