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Antichristian Education

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Toward the end of his ministry, the great evangelist Moody, it is said, noticed that his audiences were gradually changing their attitude toward the gospel. In the early days the main truths of the Bible were generally taken for granted; later there was a growing skepticism of basic Christian ideas. That incipient skepticism has now become widespread antagonism.

Because the general character of a civilization exerts a powerful, though sometimes unperceived, pressure on each individual, because also the more intellectual groups are the source of the common ideas which dominate and give a civilization its general tone, the Christian who wishes to promulgate the gospel ought to pay particular attention to the intellectual attacks on Christianity. Only by so doing can he discern the basic import of particular objections and be ready with a pertinent reason for the faith that is in him.

The first of three illustrations may be called intellectual only in a very popular sense of the word. While Lewis Browne's *This Believing World* features acknowledgements to a distinguished battery of well-known names, it must be adjudged a pseudo-intellectual work. It is not so much a leader of opinion as it is a result and an indication of what public opinion is. Only in a country where there is little knowledge of Christianity would a publishing house expect to sell such a crude product. To substantiate this, which at first may seem an extreme condemnation, quotations are selected from pages 259-292.

“The Gospels recount many legends concerning His conception, birth, and youth, but they are no more to be relied on than the suspiciously similar legends told many centuries early about Zoroaster.”

Aside from the contention that there are suspiciously similar accounts of virgin births in pagan literature, a contention not so well received since J. Gresham Machen's *Virgin Birth*, may not a Christian ask what is the source of information concerning Jesus if the Gospels do not furnish a historical account.

“He indulged in no philosophy or theology, for, after all, He was an untutored toiler who know nothing of such vanities.” (cf. Matt. 11:25 ff.)

“All the legends, all the stupid and silly and gross extravagances, all the pious embellishments and patent falsehoods that clog and confuse the Gospel accounts ...”

“At the last moment Jesus seems to have realized how reckless He had been in daring to come to Jerusalem ... Belatedly, He tried to escape with them (the disciples), but He was pursued, betrayed, and taken prisoner ...”

“And because believing in a corpse was too difficult, they began to believe that Jesus was still alive ... They even declared they had actually seen Him in the act of rising from the sepulcher ...”

“Saul had never seen Jesus in the flesh or come under the spell of His loving gospel. Actually he was but little interested in the gospel of the man Jesus.”

“The Gospels, as we now have them, could not have been written by the disciples whose

names they bear, for they are written in Greek, and the native language of most of those disciples was Aramaic.”

It is evident from these quotations that even Lewis Browne does not dare to attempt an argument in favor of his assertions. They are so stupidly perverse that the value of the book lies only in the fact that a sufficient number of Americans know so little about Christianity as to make the book profitable to the publisher. The book and the author are not leaders of opinion. They are devastating commentaries on the intellectual decline of our day.

The question now arises, How can these things be? What is the source of the ignorance and the cause of the decline? To answer this, one must turn to the scholarly productions of the last seventy-five or one hundred years. In them we find not crass and crude, but plausible misrepresentations of Christianity. The whole history of destructive biblical criticism cannot be written here; but two examples will be given to show how scholars in non-biblical subjects belittle Christianity either by assuming it to be false or by misrepresenting it, and thus causing its rejection.

Much if not all of the prevailing antichristian ideology has originated in the colleges and from them has seeped down to the ordinary levels of society. How much some of the professors are themselves unconsciously influenced by the general trend is difficult to determine, but the method by which it operates can be studied in two random examples, one from the field of Greek philosophy, the other from political science.

The first instance is that of Prof. B.A.G. Fuller, University of Southern California, in his book, *History of Greek Philosophy*. Dr. Fuller is no cheap publicity seeker; he is a scholar of ability, and the ridicule appropriate to Lewis Browne would be completely out of place in his case. Yet even the greatest scholars are not infallible. Their mistakes often determine a student's attitude and finally affect the whole community, so that in such mistakes one rightly discovers a source of much antagonism to Christianity. To combat this result one must by sober reasoning and careful statement, point out the source of the error and explain the truth of the matter. He writes on page 26:

“The world for which the blood of redemption was spilled is the moral world ... No drop of that blood overflows into the outer and physical world. In the benefits of salvation no being, animate or inanimate, save the human, shares. The physical world remains unchanged. But after all, from the Christian point of view, why should nature be affected by the process of redemption?”

Now obviously, the Scriptures are addressed to man, and consequently the plan of his salvation naturally lies written large on the surface. But Fuller's criticism is equivalent to asserting that Jesus Christ, whatever He may mean for man, is of no cosmic significance. Is this, then, what the Scriptures teach? On the contrary, they teach, in the first chapter of John's Gospel, that Christ is the *Logos*, the wisdom, or rationality, of the universe. In Colossians 1:16 we discover that all things were created by Him and for Him, including all the animate and inanimate forms. Were this all that the Scriptures said, it would be sufficient to raise serious doubts as to the accuracy of Fuller's interpretations of Christianity. For if Jesus is the Creator, would not so stupendous an event as His death have some effect on the whole creation? Now, as a matter of fact, we are not abandoned to bare conjecture, but the Scriptures add to the above information, and state positively that even the inanimate world shall be changed, and that the lower animals and even the plants shall share in the benefits of redemption. They benefit, to be sure, as plants or animals, not as human beings, but they are not, as Dr. Fuller says, excluded from God's all-embracing plan (Isa. 11:1-10, Rom. 8:19 ff.).

Furthermore, Dr. Fuller's question, “From the Christian point of view, why should nature be affected by the process of redemption?” is specifically answered in the Bible. In Genesis 3:14-19 the

curse of sin is extended to the very ground. Is it not, therefore, perfectly appropriate that redemption from sin should affect everything to which the curse applies? Nor is it true that this idea is buried so obscurely as to have been forgotten by the contemporary Christian community. If one cares to attend an orthodox Christian church about Christmas time, one is sure to hear the carol, "Joy to the World." And in this carol, Christians sing:

*"No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Not thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found."*

Certainly, Dr. Fuller, as a scholar, would not treat the texts of Aristotle so carelessly. He knows what historical accuracy means. Why the prejudice when it comes to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ?

While this is but one page in one lone book, it is indicative of how the truth of Christianity is obscured. And if the truth be obscured, how can anyone accept it. How can one believe, if he has not heard?

In politics and diplomacy, the frequently great efficiency of indirection over open and direct methods is perfectly well known. In education too, indirection is relied upon to work where a direct attack would fail to interest the irreligious and would antagonize the Christian student. Hence, in books purporting to be technical astronomy or dispassionate political science one finds perversity of expression calculated to cast slurs on the Holy Scriptures. Often the antichristian author so chooses his words that it is difficult to quote a single sentence to convict him of inaccuracy, and it becomes necessary to examine carefully an extended passage to discover exactly what is happening.

Worthy of examination is an instance of this type of attack found in an *Introduction to Political Science*, by James Wilford Garner, professor of Political Science at the University of Illinois. This textbook, in the section under consideration, states some things very well; in fact, it is the mixture of excellence and carelessness which causes the difficulty. Were it largely inaccurate or absurd like Lewis Browne's *This Believing World*, it would have little effect. Professor Garner's book, on the contrary, is scholarly and one does not expect crude blunders.

In Chapter IV the subject is the origin of the state, and on page 87 these words are to be found:

"The oldest of these theories ... is that which attributes the establishment of the state, mediately or immediately, to God or some superhuman power. The theory assumes that the will of God was made known by revelation mediately or immediately to certain persons, who were His earthly vice regents, and by them communicated to the people by whom obedience was a religious as well as a civil duty ... Biblical support for it is found in such passages as Paul's admonition to the Romans 'Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God'" (Romans 13:1).

First, one notes that this theory of the origin, or better the justification of state authority is supported by the Bible. And general condemnation of the theory involves rejection of the Scriptures. To be sure Garner said, "Biblical support is found." Now a man might find support wrongly, so that a rejection of his theory would not involve a rejection of the Bible. But no such distinction is made by Garner. Had he criticized the theory of James 1, and showed that the divine right of kings is not the same as the biblical doctrine of divine authority of the state, no one could object. But as a matter of fact, his discussion does not discriminate and his rejection apparently applies as much to the Bible as to James 1.

On page 90, in a paragraph headed, "Theocratic Doctrines No Longer Accepted," the reason for

rejecting the divine authority of government is stated as follows:

“The state is no more the direct and immediate creation of a supernatural power than any of the multifarious associations into which mankind has entered. The authority which the state exercises, whatever its origin, must be exercised through human agencies and must be humanly interpreted; that is, in the last analysis, it is only what the state chooses to make it.”

This reason for rejecting the Bible, however, does not even apply to the biblical view as Garner defined that view. As quoted above, Garner explicitly stated that the divine origin of government permits of a mediate working by God. Now he objects that since man is the means, God cannot be the source of authority. In other words, he argues that if God is the source of authority there can be no human means, no human rulers, no human government at all. The only condition on which God can be the source of human government is that there be no human government. It is this type of perverse argument, of technical incompetency, which betrays a man's subconscious predilections. Had the author been at all sympathetic toward the notion that God is the creator and ruler of the world, he would not have stumbled into this elementary logical blunder.

Following the last quotation Garner continues in this manner:

“We may accordingly dismiss the doctrine of divine right with the statement that it never was anything more than an invention of men, designed to bolster up the claims of certain rulers to hold their crowns independently of the will of the people.”

Now if the doctrine of divine right were never anything more than this, then it follows that Paul in enunciating the doctrine, was interested in bolstering up the powers and claims of Caligula and Nero. More sober historians do not usually credit Paul with such political ambitions.

From these illustrations taken from Greek philosophy and political science, there should be recognized by the appropriately equipped young Christian, a call to serve Christ in scholarship. As professors in universities and as authors they will influence an audience which does not now hear the gospel. In astronomy or zoology they can remove misapprehensions which are real though sometimes hidden obstacles to more definite evangelistic work. To be sure, the gospel of redemption by the blood of Christ must be preached and the laborers are few. Yet not all are called to be evangelists; some are called to be scholars; and in this field the laborers are fewer.