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Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective (Book Review)

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the text. Moreover, at times the language plods along and interferes with clarity, often, unfortunately, at important points. On the whole, the exposition lacks the consistent clarity one might expect from a textual-analytic approach. In fairness to the author, however, we need to remember that the writings of Marx are themselves replete with ambiguity and obscurity.

The reference to "roots" in the title of the book is somewhat vague. Precisely what does Van der Hoeven mean by "roots"? The Idealist tradition? But this he treats rather sketchily in the first chapter. The bulk of the book deals with Marx's early writings, which presumably presuppose "roots." Perhaps the book might have been more descriptively entitled *Karl Marx: the Roots of His Economic and Social Thought, or the Philosophical Roots of His Mature Thought*. Van der Hoeven seems to confirm this suggestion when he says in chapter 6: "But for all its sketchiness and its inherent problems, his philosophy is undeniably the background to his economic and social theory" (p. 97).

Despite these flaws, the book in its present form constitutes a fine introduction to the philosophy of Marx. I would especially recommend it as a text for a college course in Marxism, to be used in conjunction with, for example, the recently published *Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker.

Foundations of Christian Scholarship. Essays in the Van Til Perspective, by Gary North, editor, a Chalcedon Study, Ross House, Vallejo, California, 1976, 355 pages. Reviewed by John C. Vander Stelt, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Theology.

For addressing themselves to the crucial, intriguing, and complicated question of the possibility and nature of Christian scholarship, the authors of this publication are to be greatly commended. Under the editorship of Gary North (a disciple of John Rousas Rushdoony—founder and sole resident scholar of Chalcedon, Inc., a non-profit educational organization), eight Presbyterian scholars have made a significant attempt at demonstrating what they conceive to be the importance of C. Van Til's apologetical methodology for foundational issues in epistemology, for a number of academic disciplines, and for a reconstruction of life and culture in general.

The editor himself has applied Van Til's methodology of apologetic presuppositionalism to some basic issues in university education,

economics, sociology, and publications, whereas Rushdoony writes on the topics of common ground and psychology. C. Gregg Singer deals with history, William Blake with education, Lawrence Pratt with political science, Vern Poythress with mathematics, Greg Bahnsen with apologetics and philosophy, and John Frame with theology. Each of the authors prefaces his particular study with a long quotation taken from one of the many writings by C. Van Til on the subject of apologetics.

Except for a few obviously biased and almost unprofessional comments by the editor concerning views of certain reformed thinkers in Amsterdam, Grand Rapids, and Toronto, the manner of argumentation and the style of writing of *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* are generally attractive and even engaging. All eight writers have in no uncertain terms rejected any suggestion of a neutrality postulate as well as any hint of a religious compromise with covenant-breaking patterns of thought. It is unmistakably clear that all the contributors to this book want to think in a radically Christian manner. There is no ambiguity as to their Biblical intent and the confessional direction in which they seek to move.

This work is in my opinion somewhat defective, however, in at least one respect. The writers have not sufficiently distinguished the Biblical *foundations* for Christian scholarship from the *perspective* of C. Van Til. Whereas the former is normative, the latter is not. The specifics of Van Til's *perspective* cannot be fully understood apart from the inevitable subjectivity and historical conditionedness of also his response to the normative foundations for Christian scholarship. Whereas it is impossible to subject the *foundations* to a Biblical critique, it is possible, even mandatory, that a person's *perspective* be critically evaluated in the Light of the living Word of God.

Had these followers of Van Til done with the peculiar contents of Van Til's own presuppositions what he himself has done with the basic conceptions of other thinkers, including fellow reformed scholars, that is, subject them to a radical critique from God's Word, they would have been compelled to raise and discuss the complicated and sensitive matter of an intrusion also into Van Til's *perspective* of certain questionable (from a Scriptural viewpoint) notions—for example, Van Til's understanding of the ontological Trinity, his idealistic penchant, and his leaning toward a form of intellectualism.

I wonder whether the failure on the part of these writers to deal with this foundational question and their assumption that Van Til's

perspective is fully Biblical has not obstructed genuine progress in the matter of religious reformation and theoretic reformulation. What is so sorely needed is not a *monologue* but a true *dialogue*, especially among all scholars who wish to move in a Scripturally-orientated direction but who have been influenced by different philosophical schools of thought. Inasmuch as *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* is intended to foster a meaningful dialogue, it is to be heartily welcomed, carefully read, and eventually responded to with a rather lengthy monograph.

Creation and the Flood: An Alternative to Flood Geology and Theistic Evolution, by Davis A. Young, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1977, 217 pp., \$6.95. Reviewed by Richard G. Hodgson, Associate Professor of Astronomy.

This book is a highly competent study of God's work of creation and the Great Flood of Noah. It is marked by careful exegetical discussions of the appropriate portions of Genesis which break some important new ground in our understanding of the Scriptures.

Creation and the Flood also contains an excellent discussion of the modern geological discoveries that bear upon the question of the age of the Earth. These discoveries very strongly argue that the Earth is several billion years old, and are presented in such a way that the non-specialist can understand the methods used and the way in which these methods are validated and cross-checked. The result is a truly important book: a sound, Biblical discussion of portions of Genesis combined with a well-informed presentation of relevant geological discoveries.

Dr. Davis A. Young is in a unique position to write this book. He is a practicing geologist, educated at Princeton University, and now Associate Professor of Geology at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Some of the fruits of his own field-research enrich the book. He is also the son of the late Edward J. Young, the well-known Professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and is therefore well acquainted with Reformed, Biblical exegesis, a heritage he clearly treasures. Davis Young notes in his preface, "My father. . .and I had originally intended to collaborate on such a book as this" (p. 8). The father's death in 1968 precluded this, but as one reads the superb exegetical discussions contained in this book, one can hear the voice

of Edward J. Young still speaking.

After an introductory chapter reviewing the existing schools of thought, Young deals with theistic evolution, showing that it is not really founded upon or even permitted by the Scriptures. He calls theistic evolution a "House Built on Sand"—a sell-out to Darwinism.

The major portion of *Creation and the Flood* is directed against the superficial use of the Bible by proponents of "Mature Creationism," a school of thought which insists that the Bible teaches that the Earth and the Universe are only a few thousand years old. Mature Creationism has enjoyed widespread popularity in recent years in Fundamentalist and some Calvinist circles as a result of the writings of John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris and the activities of the Creation Research Society.

Young indicates that the proponents of Mature Creationism delight in quoting Scripture texts and data from scientific journals to the untrained public, who are too overwhelmed to realize that many of the quotations have been ripped from their original contexts and heavily reinterpreted. In his book, Young attempts to correct these misinterpretations.

While the reviewer believes Young's book to be excellent in its discussion of Scripture and of the evidence of science, it is not without some blemishes. Apart from a few typographical errors, the reviewer would mention the following:

(1) Young's doctrine of Scripture is quite orthodox, but perhaps a little over-simple. Young says, "I regard Scripture as directly identical to God's Word and therefore absolutely authoritative, infallible and inerrant" (p. 20). While the reviewer certainly agrees that the Bible is absolutely authoritative and infallible in its promises, the manuscript texts of Scripture that we now have are imperfect and show thousands of variant readings, among many of which there is no certain way of choosing the original text. This situation does not put any doctrine in jeopardy, but to say that the Scripture we now have is "directly identical to God's Word" involves something of an oversimplification.

(2) Young is quite right in insisting that the early chapters of Genesis must be regarded as history, and not as legend or myth. He does not, however, consider possible implications of the fact that whereas Genesis 2:4ff is historical narrative, the form of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is distinctly that of *poetic prose*. This is manifest in the Hebrew but usually lost in translation, and is usually a truth ignored by most commentators who write on Genesis. Since the form in Hebrew is poetic prose—setting forth