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TM (Book Review)

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emigration to the New Land: D. A. Budde, who settled near Burlington, Iowa; J. A. Wormser, a civil servant, who remained in Amsterdam; and Rev. H. P. Scholte, the founder of Pella.

Although Budde and Scholte were only a day of travel apart, still the friendship was not strengthened in America. Scholte had found his hope and refuge in Pella: in Deo spes nostra et refugium. Scholte had embraced the principle of separation of church and state because he loved the freedom of the church and did not want interference of higher authorities as he had experienced in the Netherlands. Scholte would not even tolerate intermingling of higher church authorities; he wanted an independent church. Scholte considered politics to be a neutral area. Here he had become an American pragmatist. In this respect he had left his friend Budde. Although Budde still admired Scholte for his talents and his insights in reformed theology, in a modest manner, Budde attempted to work out his Christian vision in public life. But the strongest voice kept coming from across the ocean. Throughout the correspondence Wormser was saying that he could not reconcile the idea that Christians could confess Christ in church but not publicly--in education and politics. Already in these early years, the seceders in Amsterdam were planning to erect a Reformed seminary and had quite a sum pledged for this cause. It was not until 1880 that this plan was finally realized under the leadership of Abraham Kuyper.

Stellingwerff ends his book with a call for action; he charges the reformed Christians in Amsterdam and Pella to break the cultural, political, and national barriers so that they may follow Christ in a new era as the Redeemer and King of creation.

TM, by Harold Bloomfield et al., Delacorte Press, New York, 1975, foreword by Hans Seyle, introduction by R. Buckminster Fuller. Reviewed by Richard Buckham, Instructor in Psychology.

This book is, or promises to be, a major resource for the rapidly developing interest in and commitment to Transcendental Meditation in the English-speaking world. The rise of TM has not gone without challenge from the Christian community (see, e.g., David Haddon, "Transcendental Meditation Challenges the Church," Christianity Today, 1976, Vol. 20, March 26, [pp. 15-18] and April 9 [pp. 17-19]). I will attempt to do likewise in this review.

1. The "Crisis of Modern Life," Chapter 1, is the omnipresence of stress, with the resultant anxiety and tension. In particular, it is the physiological and psychological effects (i.e., stress) of our technological society and of future shock. The solution to this crisis is flexibility (p. 5) and a "technology of human integration" (p. 6). That is, man must learn, in all dimensions of his life, to respond flexibly to that which hinders or prevents his complete fulfillment. In this context, "consciousness" and "creative intelligence" are resources in integrating that which is disintegrated because of stress.

2. TM, the "Technology of Contacting Pure Awareness," is the only adequate answer to the problem of stress and disintegration. The authors contend that TM is only a technique, and not a religion, philosophy, or way of life. They fail to realize, however, that the emphasis on and commitment to technique in post-Enlightenment Western civilization is a religious perspective. Man has, in fact, idolized his own capacity to formatively master and operate on creation. TM, rather than being uniquely different from the Zeitgeist, is actually reflective of it, just as is, e.g., Skinner's behavioral technology and the various techniques proffered by humanistic psychologies.

3. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the physiology of consciousness and TM. The authors utilize physiological half-truths with respect to the structure and function of the brain to support their arguments that TM is rooted in scientific "fact." For example, they appeal to recent research on the "split brain," making something ontological out of that which is only structural and functional. Also, their appeal to changes in "brain wave activity" as evidence of the effects of TM can be accounted for simply by the fact that people are attending the mantra in TM, and not by some putative "transformation" of brain matter by pure consciousness. (See Thompson, Introduction to Physiological Psychology, 1975, for this point on attention.)

4. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with the psychological and psychotherapeutic effects of TM. Chapter 5 compiles many personal testimonies as to the beneficial effects of TM. Predictably, all testimonies are positive in their assessment. Chapter 6 seems to assume that psychopathology is really understood and that TM is the antidote. I cannot agree with this assumption.

5. Chapters 7 and 8 explicate a "psychology of creative intelligence" and TM's program for a fulfilled society. Considered are the "impulse to fulfillment," levels of consciousness, and the promise of social change through TM. Here again the ideological (i.e., religious) stance of TM is evident.

6. To summarize: I see nothing funda-

mental in TM that is not present in other contemporary man-centered ideologies. Many of the same assumptions are made about the source of man's problems, about the nature of man (fundamentally Aristotelian, dualistic, rationalistic), and about the solution to these problems. However, it does seem that people are helped by TM, assuming the veracity of the personal testimonies cited in the text. It is not surprising, therefore, that people are attracted to TM.

There is a lesson here for Christians. Are we in fact so principial that we miss out on the psychic and behavioral fulfillment which is available to us as children of God, so that non-Christians do not see this peace and wholeness as a possibility in the Christian life? Let us pray that people will turn from TM and other humanist technologies and be attracted to a personal relationship in Christ with the living God because of the fruits of the Spirit and the total fulfillment they see manifested amongst Christians.

The Sensation of Being Somebody--by Maurice Wagner. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, 251 pages. Reviewed by Richard Buckham, Instructor in Psychology.

This book, like many others currently being published, is concerned with the Christian's self-experience and matters related thereto. From a Reformed perspective, see A. Hoekema's recent, and excellent, The Christian Looks at Himself (Eerdmans, 1975). The "self" has, of course, always been there, but the Zeitgeist, in North America anyway, found special manifestation in the emphasis on self-experience and subjectivism. Witness the rise of the existential and humanistic psychologies, the philosophy and psychology of consciousness, the influence of "self" concepts in personality theory, social psychology, and psychotherpay, and the "cult of the self" in our culture. In the light of this, it is apropos that Christians confront the problem of the self.

There are three parts to Wagner's book. Part One, "What We Are," is an explication of the the way we think about ourselves, what our basic self-identity needs are, and the mental processes to be engaged in for accomplishing an adequate self-concept. All that Wagner discusses in this section is an accurate portrayal of emotional malfunctioning due to an inadequate self-concept. What I find disconcerting in this section, and in the entire book, is an emphasis on man as a thinking self: notice his emphasis on mental processes, on self-concept as a mental picture, on re-thinking ourselves, on the need for a spiritual dimension in our thinking, and so on. I will return to this theme later.

Part Two, "How We Become What We Are," is the most disappointing part of the book. In his explication of the development of the self-concept during childhood and later years, Wagner seems to utilize an eclectic psychoanalytic perspective. There are definite allusions to Freud, Adler, Jung, Horney, and contemporary psychoanalytic ego psychology. The child is presented as being a basically hedonistic and manipulatory organism that, in effect, learns to be rational, social, and autonomous, i.e., human. I do not find it helpful for Christians to utilize Aristotelian and other humanist perspectives, even in a "baptized" fashion. I find a far better analysis of the mother-child relationship (and related matters) in MacMurray's Persons in Relation (Faber and Faber, 1961).

Part Three, "What We Can Become," in spite of the above-mentioned emphasis on man as a thinking self, is Wagner's best discussion. He realizes that the Christian life should be one of emotional fulfillment and that this is in fact possible. He is cognizant of the cruciality of the old-self-new-self split (Romans 7), and of the importance of partaking of that which is available to us as Christians in being more than conquerors over that which would hinder or prevent our full emotional development and positive self-identity. There are many beautiful insights in this part of the book.

In summary, speaking of man in such mentalistic terms hinders rather than facilitates an adequate Christian understanding of this whole matter called self-experience. Wagner's anthropology is at fault here. As to the old-self-new-self struggle, I find a far more radical and adequate analysis in Galen Sharp's The Present Kingdom of God (Revell, 1974). However, Sharp's analysis is also vitiated by a confusing anthropology.

To conclude, I cannot recommend this book as shedding any light on the problem of the self. Wagner does, however, provide some interesting practical understanding of the dynamics of self-experience. It is interesting that several contemporary secular philosopners have emphasized the centrality and significance of psychic struggle and opposition as indicators of the self (see esp. Johnstone, The Problem of the Self, 1971). I find this supportive of the Christian view that man is not his own, as it were, but is the locus of a struggle between the powers of darkness and the powers of light, even in the very heart of man.