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## Idea of a Christian College (Book Review)

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lishing churches, for in Part I he himself stresses the liturgical-missionary character of the church as God's instrument for reconciling the world to Him.

"God's Mission and the Church's Tensions," Part III, appraises the increasing polarization between certain evangelicals in the missionary movement and many World-Council-of-Churches-oriented mission figures. Several chapters discuss in depth the theology of the liberation approach to missions as articulated by Latin Americans. Peter Beyerhaus, on the evangelical side, is severely criticized for his polemical attitude toward ecumenical efforts in mission. Part III is probably as fair and comprehensive an assessment of discussions in missions today as has appeared anywhere.

Costas is a third-world churchman from Costa Rica. He is a rising star on the missiological horizon, whose theological brilliance and whose painstaking effort to be Biblical as well as relevant in his writing make him a figure to be read seriously by anyone who wishes to stay informed in the area of missions.

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**The Evangelical Faith**—by Helmut Thielicke. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974. 420 pages, \$10.95. Reviewed by J. B. Hulst, Dean of Students and College Pastor.

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Helmut Thielicke is First Dean of the Theological Faculty and Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Hamburg, Germany. He is the author of several books, such as Between God and Satan, A Little Exercise for Young Theologians, Out of the Depths, and The Silence of God.

Until the publication of his Theological Ethics, Thielicke was best known in this country as a preacher. According to G. W. Bromiley, translator of the book under consideration, Thielicke's "real vocation, however, has been that of a theologian, and it is no secret that he has been disconcerted rather than flattered that his incidental activity should have become the basis of his reputation. The present work should help to correct the situation" (p. 5).

The Evangelical Faith is the first of a three-volume dogmatics. The second volume will consider the doctrines of God and of Christ, and the third will deal with the doctrines of the Holy Spirit, the Church, and eschatology.

The Evangelical Faith bears the subtitle Prolegomena: The Relation of Theology to Modern Thought Forms. This subtitle is significant, for it clearly describes what Thielicke endeavors to do in this first volume. As the author himself states in the preface:

This first volume of a systematic theology will attempt clearance work in a cluttered situation. It will survey current debates from a defined standpoint, try to pin down terms like myth or death of God which are often bandied about far too freely, and seek to give them their true meaning. The attempt, then, is to get a grasp of modern theology, sounding out and preparing the ground on which to build. (p. 11)

But Thielicke is concerned with more than a grasp of modern theology. It is his purpose, within the context of modern theological debates, to set forth a doctrine of faith. Further, he is determined to articulate this doctrine of faith without presenting theology as anthropology. Seeking to dissociate himself from those who deal with faith only as it is integrated into the human consciousness, Thielicke expresses interest, not so much in the subject of faith, as in that in which faith believes and by which man is changed into a new creature.

Whether Thielicke succeeds in the realization of his purpose depends not only upon what this volume contains, but upon that which will appear in the second and third volumes of this comprehensive work. Therefore, we eagerly await the appearance of those pages which constitute the total result of Thielicke's stated attempt to produce a comprehensive work.

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**The Idea of a Christian College**—by Arthur F. Holmes, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, 118 pages, \$2.95 (paper). Reviewed by Nick Van Til, Professor of Philosophy.

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Professor Holmes writes out of the background of many years of teaching experience and student contact at Wheaton College. He packs a lot of ideas into this little volume. The subtitle, Philosophy of Christian Education for Laymen, is appropriate as Holmes' lucid writing

can be readily understood by all those interested in Christian higher education. Chapter headings such as "Why a Christian College?", "Liberal Arts, What and Why," and "Academic Freedom" should invite one to an immediate and careful reading.

Holmes invites us to treat "all learning 'religiously' rather than restricting religion to one or two courses." He would have a worthwhile chapel service, but would not make it the hallmark of a college's Christian emphasis. He asks rhetorically, "Is the idea of a Christian college, then, simply to offer good education plus biblical studies in an atmosphere of piety? These are desirable ingredients, but are they the essence of the Idea?" (p. 15) Continuing, Holmes says, "What we need is not Christians who are also scholars but Christian scholars, not Christianity alongside education but Christian education" (p. 17).

From the foregoing we can conclude that Holmes holds a more integrated view of Christian education than many Evangelicals. In fact, he maintains a fear of the kind of "Fundamentalism" which would establish a "Defender of the Faith" type of college. Holmes shares the fear of the 1966 Danforth Report that Defenders of the Faith tend to indoctrinate rather than to educate. Holmes suggests, "The educated Christian exercises critical judgment and manifests the ability to interpret and evaluate information, particularly in the light of Christian revelation. In a word, if he is to act creatively and to speak with cogency and clarity to the minds of his fellows, the educated Christian must be at home in the world of ideas and men" (p. 15).

In view of Holmes' reference here to critical and evaluative assessment and his references elsewhere to that aspect of education as compared to indoctrination, I think it should be noted that for everyone who educates, dogmas enter into the process. The fact that the Christian interprets and evaluates "particularly in the light of Christian revelation" assumes that he holds to certain dogmas concerning the bases of evaluation. While eschewing the Defender of the Faith role, Holmes might well have pointed to the fact that all educators defend some faith or other and subscribe to some dogmas, Christian or non-Christian.

Rejecting the designation "presupposition" as too analytically rigid, Holmes wants the Scriptures to furnish Christian "perspective" for his educational activity. Adding this to his earlier reference to the total religious character of education, we are somewhat surprised to read,

"There are some disciplines in a Christian liberal arts college to which the specific content of the Christian faith makes no evident difference. What difference does it make, for example, to mathematics" (p. 49). For Holmes, a philosophy of mathematics serves a purely prefatory function and does not enter into the subject matter of the course.

I would agree that there is no ostensible difference in the way a Christian and a non-Christian add a column of figures in arithmetic, but doesn't the Christian perspective cut down to a basic antithesis, which is of the essence of Christian education? Perhaps it's the case that ~~we have not done all the antithetical probing that~~ we should. (Cf. *Pro Rege*, December 1974, under the heading, "The Antithesis in the Natural Sciences." Articles in their fields by Aaldert Mennega, Russell Maatman, Richard Hodgson, and Gary Parker. Also in the March, 1975, *Pro Rege*, "What is Number?" by Willis Alberda.)

As a philosopher, I would have to take marked exception to the following suggestion by Holmes when he writes, "The historical method has considerable merit in the humanities. In introducing students to philosophy, one obvious way to expose the effect of Christian perspectives is to include readings from first rate philosophers of the past who were themselves Christian theists. That is usually far more effective than a teacher's own half-baked, underdeveloped notions. One might include Christian philosophers of different sorts, Augustine's Christianization of Cicero; Aquinas' use of Aristotelian ideas; Descartes, Leibniz, Locke and Berkeley and their attempts to justify and limit human reason in dependence on God, while avoiding the dangers in the current mechanistic view of nature and of man" (p. 61).

In the above suggestion, I would have no quarrel with an historical approach. But I do wonder how one goes about judging what is half-baked, if, from a Scriptural perspective, one does not include the synthesis philosophy of Aquinas under that rubric. Earlier, Holmes held out for Christian scholars and not merely Christians who are also scholars. Can one avoid the conclusion that at best Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Berkeley were Christians who were also philosophers and not Christian philosophers. And is the basic rationalism of Descartes' philosophy an improvement over one that is mechanistically deterministic? And how can one place the label of Christian theism on the thought of John Locke when Locke wants revelation to pass the test of reason?

From Holmes' catalog of philosophers one would be led to conclude that rationalism and Christian theism are mutually compatible or that Christian theists can leave areas of thought uncovered by their Christian perspective. In either case, Holmes here does lapse into a kind of "Fundamentalism" which has at its root a basic Arminianism, as it seems to leave room for areas of autonomy in human thought. Autonomy is here to be construed as meaning that man can approach creation as if it is not completely pre-interpreted and controlled by the Creator. Holmes does not presume to exercise that autonomy himself, but extends the privilege to his philosophic predecessors.

Space keeps me from pointing to further agreements and disagreements. Needless to say, the latter are not included to discourage the prospective reader, but rather to stimulate interest. Holmes has many valuable insights to share. If you participate one way or another in Christian education, Holmes gives you one more way to extend your participation.

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#### **The Missionary Nature of the Church—by**

Johannes Blauw, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974, 182 pages, \$3.45 (paperback). Reviewed by James De Jong, Assistant Professor of Theology.

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With the printing of this review, fourteen years will have passed since the appearance of the first, the German edition of Blauw's book. The German title, *Gottes Werk in dieser Welt*, more accurately reflects the substance of the study, commissioned by the Working Committee of the Department of Missionary Studies, at the time a joint agency of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches. It was designed as an evaluative survey of the missionary implications found in the writings of modern Biblical theologians. Thirty-five pages of footnotes in small case letters testify to Blauw's careful survey of the field. However, the then-Secretary of the Netherlands Missionary Council has produced more than a survey. This project is an original, complete, and stimulating Biblical theology of missions which has become a standard source in the field. A measure of the esteem in which it is held is the number of English and American publishers who have marketed printings of it between 1962 and 1974.

Blauw observes in his introduction that mission itself has become a problem: "The problematic character of the missionary movement which began about two and a half centuries ago has led to an ever more insistent question as to the why of missions" (page 9). Believing that the only defensible solution of the problem should be a Biblical one, Blauw defends the thesis that the entire Scripture regards mission as belonging to the essence of the church. Mission is never an option, but always an imperative for God's people. Even her thinking on mission is effected: "The consequence for theology, I think, is that a theological reflection of missionary service is possible and extremely necessary, but not a 'theology of missions' " (page 121). There is a missionary aspect to every function of the church.

The author's approach is one which traces the mission motif through the history of salvation. He argues that Genesis 1-11 establishes the "perspective of universalism" found in the rest of the Old Testament. The entire Old Testament, not just Jonah and sections of the Psalms and Isaiah, "has the whole world in view" (page 17). God's work of salvation proceeds via the election of Abraham and Israel. But as Genesis 12:3 shows, this is always an election for service. Although God's covenant with Israel is particularistic in manifestation, its design is universalistic; in its Old Testament manifestation, God's mission to the world is centripetal, that is, it functions by attracting the nations to Israel and to her God. Blauw interprets the book of Jonah, the Old Testament Messianic figures and titles, references to the nations, and the eschatology of the prophets in terms of the universalistic presupposition of early Genesis. In the proselytism of the diaspora and the appearance of the Septuagint, he finds the harbinger of transition from a centripetal to a centrifugal form of the divine mission of salvation. However, only with the work of salvation completed in Christ's death and resurrection do we find the church commissioned to go out and to proclaim salvation to the nations.

Blauw might be challenged for making Jonah a parable to Israel, for treating election in only one of its Biblical facets, for simplifying Old Testament particularism (Was not Israel more than an instrument for the salvation of the nations, namely, a special object of God's salvation?). But remembering the thrust of Blauw's study, we can only applaud the forceful manner in which the author confronts the church with her missionary nature.