

THE APOLOGETIC NEEDS FOR THE AGE OF AQUARIUS

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Traditionally theology was called the queen of the sciences. In theory at least it meant that theology topped the list in man's never ending quest for knowledge and particularly for ultimates. Hidden in theology's queenship was the notion that all of life and conduct including the political, economic, social, ethical and philosophical had their "ground of being," to use Tillich's phrase, in theology. Life was rooted in theology, informed by theology and found to be false or true to the extent that it corresponded to theological realities.

Theology in turn was grounded in God's self-revelation and this was commonly held to be the Word of God written. This Word not only revealed the Incarnate Word; it also formed the framework that gave meaning to all of life. This idea that theology was queen and that all thought was related and subject to it was held by Jonathan Edwards, who, as much as any man, influenced eighteenth century American religious life. His biographer says:

Throughout his mature life as well there would be the recurring ambition to bring vast areas of knowledge within an orderly system, in which everything would have a place, part relating to part. He once dreamed of writing *A Rational Account of the Christian Religion*, in which all art and all science would find center and meaning in theology (*Jonathan Edwards: Basic Writings; XII: Forward* by Ola Elizabeth Winslow. The New American Library, New York, 1966).

I share Edwards' view but I shudder at the failure of evangelicals to execute in life what most of them pay lip service to in principle. I am not speaking of non-evangelicals for many of whom theology is irrelevant. I am not speaking of those who follow the current fads of intuitionism, humanism, subjectivism and non-theistic existentialism. I am speaking to those who profess to believe that life is of one whole piece, that ultimate objective absolutes underlie all reality, and that the theology derived from Scripture has something to say to men in the arts, the sciences, and the social sciences.

Unhappily, even among evangelicals theology has been divorced from the other disciplines found in the curriculum of the average Christian institution. Most of the historians, political scientists, sociologists

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and economists, to name a few in the soft sciences, have been trained in secular graduate schools where Christian theology was never brought to bear on these disciplines. Once these social scientists graduated they gravitated to teaching posts in evangelical schools where they now pursue their studies, teach their classes, and indoctrinate their students as though theology had nothing to say to them. They read their Bibles, say their prayers, attend their churches, and confess their commitment to Christ—but they live in two worlds, separated one from the other without intersecting at any point. The theologians do no better. Steeped in their preoccupation with God's revelation, they do not often relate what *they* know to politics, economics, sociology and the like. The theologians know little about the social sciences; the social scientists know little about theology. Each without the other, without interdisciplinary study, without cross fertilization, is bound to be truncated, bound to remain infantile, and certain to be ineffectual if not misinformed, arriving at conclusions that are sure to be misleading.

Let me illustrate why I believe that all of human life involves theological questions and how the teachers in the major disciplines of all liberal arts curricula are forced to render theological verdicts whether they do so knowingly or at the subconscious level. I refer first of all to economics.

American economic life until recently has been characterized by individualism and free enterprise. During the nineteenth century these were markedly influenced by social Darwinism which had its roots in biological evolution and particularly in the principle of the survival of the fittest. The Robber Barons, some of whom were certainly Christians, accepted the biological concept of the survival of the fittest and applied it with a vengeance to industry. The weak were eliminated and even as nature appears to be capricious and has no regard for morality *per se*, so the strong often had little regard for morality as they eliminated the competition by collusion, kickbacks, preferential freight rates, price wars and the like.

But the scene has changed dramatically in the twentieth century. Free enterprise and individualism as they were known in the nineteenth century are dead. So is social Darwinism whose demise has not included a repudiation of biological evolution on which it rests. And this anachronism alone is worthy of somebody's special research and reflection. America is moving toward socialism and has already embraced the welfare state as an economic reality. One need not go beyond the halls of academia to realize how many university and college professors are admitted socialists. Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Maier Schlesinger, Jr., are two who come to mind as well as the retired columnist Walter Lippmann who influenced a generation of academic minds.

One of the consequences rising out of the trend toward socialism has been increased government intervention in all phases of economic life.

President Nixon, who at least in theory has been thought of as a supporter of free enterprise and individualism, has by his actions denied these principles. He was the one who was opposed to wage and price controls. But he is also the one who has used them. Kenneth Galbraith predicted two years ago that he would be forced to do this.

Moreover, America has by its economic policies in the international market built up a balance of payments deficit that is far greater than our ability to pay in gold. Technically we are facing bankruptcy and even the recent devaluation of the dollar may not finally stave off financial disaster. The crisis at home and abroad has been accelerated by increasing the supply of paper money through the use of the printing press. This has fed inflation with the result that the purchasing power of the dollar has declined and this in turn has worsened the wage-price spiral for which there appears to be no seeming end.

What has happened economically is organically related to the state of mind of the American people. In an increasingly materialistic culture a dominant characteristic of the American mind has been the desire for economic security. And this is true even for many of those who call themselves Christian. Moreover, belief that you can get something for nothing is widespread. This does not necessarily imply that people are stupid. They may be avaricious instead, so long as they are on the receiving end. This belief in something for nothing has been exacerbated by a corollary doctrine: the idea that the state owes every man a living. But the state has no wealth of its own. Therefore it can dispense no largess that it does not secure first from the taxpayer. Thus when I adhere to the view that the state owes me a living, this should really be translated that other people should support me.

These economic matters to which I have referred involve theological considerations. Unfortunately the average theologian knows little about economics and the average Christian economist knows little about theology. Free enterprise, individualism, the welfare state, socialism, inflation, and deficit financing involve moral questions as well as economic ones. Matters of principle as well as matters of expediency and pragmatic decisions are at stake. It is high time for evangelical theologians and economists to sit down and talk through the basic issues and come up with guidelines to help us out of the thicket into which we have wandered.

Secondly, consider the realm of political science, and that not from the domestic aspect but from the vantage point of international relationships. In the book *Fragments of My Fleece*, Dean Acheson, one-time secretary of state, now deceased, made this statement: "We can see—if we will only open our eyes—that one of the ideas we have discussed must be a guiding principle. Power can be limited only by counterbalancing power. Without that, treaties, international organizations, and international law are of no use whatever. The possessor of unopposed

or unopposable power can sweep them aside and make his will law.”

George W. Ball, who reviewed this book (*Book World*, Nov. 21, 1971, p. 5), said of this statement: “If that was an unpopular idea when Dean Acheson made his speech sixteen years ago, it is rank heresy today, but for him the truth was not to be found through Gallup Polls or in the fashion pages, but from logic and experience.” Whether you like it or not, the balance of power concept has governed the relationships of nations from time immemorial. In contemporary life NATO and SEATO were brought into being to offset the power of the Communist bloc just as the Warsaw Pact of the Soviet Union was designed to balance the power of the West.

International relations are more frequently than not amoral rather than moral or immoral. World War II provides a good illustration. It was waged by the democracies against Fascist totalitarianism. But the Soviet Union, no less totalitarian than Germany and Italy, fought on the side of the democracies. The morality or immorality of Soviet totalitarianism didn't enter the picture. The policies of the democracies and the Soviet Union coincided at this point and it was in their common interest to fight side by side against the Fascists. When once the war was won, the common cause that bound the democracies and the Soviet Union together ceased to exist. And from that day to this the balance of power has been operative between the Soviet Union and its erstwhile partners of World War II.

Of great interest and surely of great dissension has been U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Curiously enough, some who have exhibited the least concern for morality, including people like Jane Fonda, have evinced a sudden and particularistic interest in morality with reference to this war. It has been labeled immoral and obscene even as it has been vigorously defended moralistically as a fulfillment of treaty obligations and a deterrent to larger Communist aggression. Once one goes the moralistic route he enters the realm of theology. And moralistic approaches have little to commend them unless there are absolute, objective standards by which it can be reasonably determined what is and isn't moral. Nor should the protest of pacifist groups like the Quakers be dismissed unless and until both theologians and political scientists have carefully weighed their arguments for such a position.

The recent Pakistan-India war illustrates perfectly the complexities of relating biblical principles to international affairs. Here a democracy, India, warred against Pakistan, a non-democratic state. Each of the protagonists was backed by a strong Communist power, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. India, the overt attacker, sought to justify its actions on moral grounds. Pakistan, which had certainly acted less than justly in its relations with East Pakistan, sought the support of the world on the moral ground that India had committed aggression against it. What should the attitude of the Christian be to this and how

can he know unless both theological and political science insights are brought to bear on the situation?

Developments with reference to the People's Republic of China further illustrate the point. For years the U.S. policy has been moralistic, based on the fiction that Taiwan represented all China. Whatever may be our feeling toward and our relationship to Red China, this much is clear: however much we may dislike Communism, Red China is a viable political entity with more than 700 million people and it is not going to disappear overnight. And however much anyone might hope for Taiwan to invade mainland China and dispossess Chairman Mao and Chou en lai, it is wishful thinking and far from reality.

Moreover, Scripture itself poses ambiguities concerning the relation of believers to pagan states and their rulers. Joseph served the Pharaoh in Egypt and did so in good conscience. Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar and his successors and did so also in good conscience. They had divine approval even though their monarchs were wicked men whose decisions were hardly in accord with biblical principles.

Perhaps the dilemma can be highlighted by the response Lord Carradan gave in reply to questions when he addressed the World Council of Churches in Uppsala in 1968. He was asked why Britain had initiated economic sanctions against Rhodesia but had failed to do so in the case of South Africa. Since the issue of racism was at stake in both cases, the questioner wanted to know why there was unequal treatment. Lord Carradan expressed himself explicitly. For Britain to initiate sanctions against South Africa, he said, would be to ruin Britain economically. Therefore expediency based wholly on pragmatic considerations caused Britain to forego economic sanctions against South Africa. Morality would have dictated sanctions but when faced with the consequences, Britain decided on what it felt to be the lesser of two evils: it would be more immoral to break Britain economically than it would be to initiate sanctions against South Africa. Thus it may be seen from these illustrations that decisions in international relations are not only political; they are moral as well. Thus there is a real need for political scientists and theologians to sit together to forge out a life and world view in this arena.

Thirdly, we shall take a look at some matters that generally concern the sociologist and have to do with social relationships. Surely one of the most vexing and as yet still unresolved problems is racism. This, of course, is a theological as well as a social problem. It is manifested not only in the area having to do with the pigmentation of one's skin. Nor is it, in this form, limited to white racism. There is yellow and brown and black racism as well. There is also national racism which exists between people of the same skin color but coming from diverse national origins. The Czechs versus the Slavs, the Irish versus the English, the Arabs versus the Jews, the Poles versus the Germans and the Russians are just

a few of them. Then there is a racism based on religion: Catholic versus Protestant, Jew versus Christian, Mohammedan versus Hindu, and even atheist versus theist. And who can deny the racism that exists because of sex distinctions: male versus female. These are certainly moral as well as sociological questions and as such require interaction of sociologists and theologians.

Consider also the rapid development of urbanization around the world. Everywhere man is faced with mammoth ghettos with all the economic maladjustments that they bring. Vast hordes of people have been uprooted from the land and the security that it brought with it. The urban dweller easily develops an anxiety syndrome because he has nothing to fall back on during times of extensive economic dislocation and mass unemployment. When such contingencies arise and even when they don't exist, people want safeguards against them and so they turn to the welfare state. More frequently than not the promise of bread makes people (and that means us too) willing to suffer the curtailment of the loss of their freedoms for this form of security.

May it not be that the social situation is responsible in a large measure for the copout syndrome that has affected numbers of our younger generation and older ones too. Faced with massive contemporary problems that seem overwhelming and for which there seem to be no adequate answers, withdrawal is an appealing alternative. In a materialistic culture that emphasizes gadgetry, those who do not have enough money to buy them or who don't want them do use the copout technique.

Copping-out is not a new response; it has existed from time immemorial although current conditions make it especially attractive. David the warrior king of Israel has left us a record of his own desire to cop out. In the 55th Psalm he records this experience. He said: "My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me. And I say, 'O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest; yea, I would wander afar, I would lodge in the wilderness, I would haste to find me a shelter from the raging wind and tempest'" (vv. 4-8). Disenchantment or copping out has theological implications.

Social justice is one of the torturing questions facing society today. To talk of justice is to assume the existence of some standard outside man that has invariable certitude. If this were not true then justice would be ephemeral, for when each man determines for himself what justice is then it would vary from one to another and have no binding effect on anyone except the individual who made the decision. It is here that situation ethics displays its barrenness. Since only the individual in the existential moment can make the decision and since nothing is prohibited, then nothing is ultimately forbidden. Whichever road a man takes, however, involves theological considerations. Thus the sociologist needs the services of the theologian even as the theologian needs the

service of the sociologist in order to understand the range of the problems and to view the problems from a sociologist's as well as a theologian's perspective. Of one thing we can be sure: life is of one piece and sociology does not exist in a theological vacuum whether the sociologists sense it or not.

Fourth, this brings us to the ethical dimension of man's existence. Even those cultures that profess to be atheistic, such as the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, cannot escape involvement in this area of life. It was James Reston of the *New York Times* who, on his return from Red China, stated that its ethical precepts are far higher than those of the United States and indeed are close to America's former Puritanism. It was C. S. Lewis in his thoughtful and perceptive book *The Abolition of Man* who quoted Aristotle as saying that the purpose of education is to teach youth what they ought to do. But this is impossible unless there are ethical oughts that are of the essence of ultimate reality. Lewis argues that nature itself, irrespective of one's specific religious attachment, proclaims ethical absolutes that have found common consent and expression in all religions and it might be added, in the case of Red China, in a country with no religion.

The acceptance of certain forms of conduct in no way validates these actions unless they are consonant with the ethical "oughts" to which men and history bear witness and which time has shown reinforces the fabric of society and furthers legitimate relationships among men. In America today there is a great struggle being waged to make forms of conduct socially acceptable that have heretofore been regarded as illicit. Thus fornication, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, lesbianism, and abortion are advocated and practiced by at least a significant minority of the population, a minority that is determined to make these things licit in law and acceptable even to people who do not choose to practice them.

Let me draw attention to two specific cases, not with the view to passing judgment in either instance but to illustrate the need for ethicists and theologians to work together to demonstrate that conscience in and of itself is no reliable guide; indeed, multitudes of people commit heinous acts in good conscience with no particular thought that what they have done is in any sense immoral.

The first case has to do with Desi Arnaz, Jr., as reported in the Sunday newspaper magazine *Parade* (Oct. 17, 1971). He is the all American boy, a tennis playing athlete, open by nature, outgoing and pleasant. He wears a crucifix around his neck and spends much of his spare time reading. At eighteen his illegitimate son was born. He said, "I love him just as I love his mother. But the relationship between Patty and me has altered. Our passion is not as tempestuous as it once was. Because she is an honest and decent and forthright girl, Patty has told me only a few days ago that she has now fallen in love with some other lucky young

man and plans to marry him. . . . Naturally my male vanity is a trifle shattered that she has fallen out of love with me and in love with someone else. But at the ripe old age of eighteen I feel sure I will be able to overcome it." His father wrote him a man to man letter in 1969 in which he said, "Persevere. Keep swinging. And don't forget that the Man upstairs is always there, and all of us need His help." It is not necessary to mention all of the specific ethical issues raised by this illustration but this much is clear. There is no apparent notion existent of a holy, transcendent God of righteousness, justice, wrath or judgment. He is the Man, not the God, upstairs, anthropomorphized and brought down to man's level. There is no awareness that he who performs the deed shall eat the fruit of it. Rather, it illustrates a modern notion of God as a glorified Santa Claus who exists to be used as, for example, Charles Fillmore, the founder of Unity, delineated Him.

The second illustration comes from "The Gossip Column" in the *Washington Post* for September 26, 1971. This is a question and answer situation. The writer from Dayton, Ohio, asked the following question and received the answer:

Q: I just read Norman Mailer's book, "The Prisoner of Sex" and I am dying to know who he is talking about when he says he "captured the mistress of a Potentate of 'Time' (magazine)." Who is he talking about?

A: Henry Luce—who else? Mr. Luce brought the lady, then in her early twenties, to New York from a romantic idyll in Europe and put her to work in his magazine empire. At one point, a Luce associate asked the lady if she would please return to her native England because circulating rumors of the liaison were "threatening Henry's moral leadership of America." About this time Mailer stepped in and saved Henry from himself. Mailer married Lady Jean Campbell, granddaughter of the press tycoon, Lord Beaverbrook, and fathered one child by her. They are now divorced but still fond of one another.

One does not need to elaborate on this illustration either except to ask the question whether there is any vital connection between the profession a man makes and his conduct. Both illustrations I have used open the door wide to an understanding of relativistic ethics in our day as well as to the question whether what one says he does in good conscience is a reliable guide. It was John Knox who when Queen Mary objected to what he said by claiming that her conscience said it wasn't so, replied that conscience needs to be educated and that from the Word of God. The ethicist has need of the theologian even as the theologian needs to understand and grapple with the problems faced by the ethicist.

It would be imprudent not to mention the realm of philosophy which is so vital a discipline in determining what the life and world view of men will be. Even those who have never studied philosophy have been influenced by it and every painter, writer, musician and movie

producer in one way or another makes use of philosophy's viewpoints whether he has studied it or not. The philosophers have made available to men a large variety of options across the years. Time makes it impossible to mention all of the options or even to expatiate on more than one or two of them. Each of us is familiar with logical positivism, empiricism, agnosticism, secularism, and humanism. I would like to say a word or two about two options that have had large success in capturing the minds and the allegiances of many people during the course of this century. I refer to dialectical materialism and atheistic existentialism.

Dialectical materialism is beset by two basic errors that disqualify it for serious consideration by theologians and also by philosophers. It presupposes that matter, not spirit, lies behind all reality, i.e., the material rather than the non-material. If matter is basic then nothing precedes it, including God. Materialism is therefore atheistic. It is not and cannot be agnostic, for it would then leave open the possibility of a non-material postulate. But once having settled on materialism it must be atheistic. Its second presupposition has to do with the dialectic and here it supposes the unity of opposites. This is expressed in the concept of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The antithesis is the opposite of the thesis and from the interaction of opposites a new synthesis comes into being. This view destroys the traditional law of antithesis on which logic and philosophy have relied for centuries. But here it is that philosophy as it devises an apologetic has need of the theologian who brings to bear upon the question the notion of God's self-revelation in the Scripture. And the theologian needs the interaction of the philosopher to teach him logic, orderly processes of thinking and objective detachment.

Atheistic existentialism goes beyond dialectical materialism, for it declares that life is meaningless. Jean-Paul Sartre said "there is no human nature, since there is no God to conceive it. Not only is man what he conceives himself to be, but he is also only what he wills himself to be after his thrust toward existence. . . . Man is nothing else but what he makes himself." So also Joseph Wood Krutch, former Columbia University professor, says, "We know that man is only an animal, and that there is no purpose for him in the universe."

In existential painting it makes no difference which way you turn the canvas. The message comes through clear and sharp. "Life has no meaning." In music John Cage put together a series of notes selected at random. He calls his method "purposeful purposelessness." Translated it says "there is no meaning to life." In the theatre Bergman produces the film "The Ritual," of which *Time* magazine said "Reality is distorted and logic becomes madness." Of the movie "Stolen Kisses" it was said the hero "doesn't know where he's going and couldn't aim himself in the right direction if he did." For life has neither rhyme nor reason.

It is in the arena of this new climate that the Christian philosopher and the theologian are called to work coordinately to forge a new apolo-

getic to help men form a life and world view that is consistent with biblical revelation.

As I come to the close of my paper I would like to say with as much emphasis as possible that the world is desperately in need of a new Christian apologetic that will not only reveal the shortcomings of the non-biblical options but which will present a case for the Christian life and world view in the light of contemporary conditions. Secondly, I must conclude that even the Evangelical Theological Society composed of biblical scholars and theologians cannot do the job alone. They simply do not possess the knowledge or the competence in the disciplines that lie outside their own field of endeavor. They require help from the scholars who have mastered the fields of economics, political science, sociology, ethics, and philosophy, to mention only those to which I have drawn attention. But the scholars in these fields are most frequently theologically illiterate and must look for help from the theologians. The great need of the age of Aquarius is to forge an interdisciplinary consortium that will attack the problem from every angle, develop a compelling apologetic and stand before the world convinced of their basic presuppositions and unashamed of their conclusions. Such an alliance of scholars from a wide diversity of disciplines could do for this age what needs to be done and thus fulfill the vision of Jonathan Edwards, who sensed the possibilities but never completed the work of putting on paper "a rational account of the Christian religion in which all art and all science would find center and meaning in theology."