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The Christian World View and the New Era in Science

AUGUST C. REHWALDT

In 1966 President Oliver R. Harms released a position paper of the Commission on Social Action of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod which read in part:

The account of God's Creation implies that God proposes to carry out the chief intentions of the created universe through man—in the image of God. Therefore the advancing mastery of man over nature, whether on the inorganic or the organic level, is in keeping with God's plan for man—provided that man fulfills the intentions that God has for the created world.

The present article will concern itself chiefly with man's mastery over nature by means of the intellectual capacities which God has so lavishly bestowed on him and which God preserves even today, even though man has not fulfilled the intentions of God for the created world. It will also show that the vitiation of God's intentions and purposes for man and the created world is in the process of being resolved even now.

THE NATURE OF SCIENCE

The scope of natural science today is so wide and its ramifications are so many that it is not easy to formulate a definition that is comprehensive enough to cover the whole field. That of Aldert van der Ziel is useful: "a systematic investigation, in-

terrelation, and exposition of a certain field of human experience."¹

Science concerns itself with the facts and data of human experiences. The senses and the mind are involved in the apprehension of these facts. Scientific investigation involves the senses, or the senses extended and sharpened by scientific instruments (such as the microscope, telescope, and spectroscope). What the nature of these facts is depends on the field which is investigated. An investigation of biological evolution would involve facts from, for example, the fields of botany, zoology, geology, and paleontology. If this gathering of facts or of empirical observations is subsequently followed by interrelation and exposition of these facts, the whole procedure would be scientific; without these last two it would be no more than entertainment. Interrelation and exposition of these empirical observations employs the processes of reason, such as logic and inductive reasoning. Hypotheses (tentative explanations) and syntheses are also employed. All is the proper use of the reason which the Creator bestows on man and preserves, as we confess with Luther: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me . . . my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them."

¹ Aldert van der Ziel, *The Natural Sciences and the Christian Message* (Minneapolis: T. S. Denison and Co., 1960), p. 14. See also pp. 14—17, and CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, XXIX (June 1958), 422—25.

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This is part of the "fatherly, divine goodness and mercy" of which Luther speaks in this connection. Like sunlight and daily bread, reason is bestowed upon all men, precisely because they are God's human creatures. Special aptitudes and capacities of reason are distributed in varying degrees according to the Fatherly wisdom and the Fatherly intentions toward each individual. These gifts of God, reason and the senses, are employed in scientific investigation.

"Science is essentially a point of view" by means of which one arrives at *proximate truth*. Hugh S. Taylor, professor of chemistry and dean of the graduate school at Princeton University, asserts:

Any scientist past his middle age in life who soberly analyzes the concepts of scientific truth with which he has been familiar in his professional lifetime is forced continuously to recognize the proximate nature of the scientific "truths" which he is called upon to communicate to succeeding generations of students. . . . It is incumbent on the science teacher steadily to impress upon his students this aspect of scientific truth.²

Taylor does not hesitate to discuss "the large measure of faith which enters into all his activities as a scientist," particularly when developing a synthesis. A synthesis is based on some scientific fact, or it may be based on a principle or law which cannot from its very nature be proved but which is generally accepted as true and which the scientist also personally accepts as true. Resting on truth, either proximate or assumed, the scientist reaches out for the unknown by means of his scientific procedures with the result that a fact or

a principle is uncovered which was not known before.

He [the scientist] can go further than the affirmation of his belief in their [unproved principles or laws] truth. He can show that having made his affirmation, he can proceed, acting on the assumption of their truth, to discover new results, stemming from the acceptance, which results can be tested experimentally, and with a high degree of rigor, and can be shown to be valid within the framework in which he is operating. He gains thereby a pragmatic sanction for his creed, fortifies it by continuous use and continued test, and emerges with an ever-increasing respect for the scientific creed by which he lives.³

We see from this that the result of "a reaching from the known, or from an assumed truth, to the unknown" always produces a doublet: a new fact or principle is uncovered; the basic truth, actual or assumed, is put to the test as to validity. The new fact would constitute an indirect proof.

IMMANENT EXISTENCE

The transcendence of God the Creator, or His "hiddenness" in creation, and the creatureliness of the creature are apprehended by faith. Our reason and our senses apprehend scientifically the animate and inanimate members of nature in their temporality. All parts of this temporal creation have their origin in the Eternal. Their temporal and spatial existence we call reality. That is, they have an existence which we can apprehend through the senses. These realities stand in a dual relation. On the one hand, they exist in the frame of temporal and earthly events, and so are members of a chain of events we call cause and effect; on the other hand,

² Hugh S. Taylor, *Religious Perspectives of College Teaching in the Physical Sciences* (New Haven: The Edward W. Hazen Foundation, 1951), pp. 26—27.

³ Ibid., p. 28.

they are dependent on the Word in every movement of their existence (creatureliness). Every creature, animate or inanimate, by virtue of its being, knowingly or unknowingly confesses: "in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17: 28). Each creature is a real entity, distinct from God, originated by God and endowed with an immanent existence of its own in space and time.

With this *immanent existence* we have arrived at a point at which the creation becomes an offense to faith. Edmund Schlink says: "It therefore is not easier to know God's creation than his redemption."⁴ Here we are face to face with the great antinomy of creation: the whole creation upheld by the power of the Word, which is Jesus Christ, "in whom all things hold together" (Col. 1:17), opposed by the whole creation in its temporal existence, that is, in its physical existence, independent and operating through and by its own inherent power. In other words, creatureliness opposed by earthliness. Both truths must stand simultaneously.

Ordinarily this antinomy does not bother us at all, for in the thinking of many modern Christians, God is so far removed from the many little and ordinary things of life that a sort of Christian atheism has developed, as Werner Heisenberg once put it. We all have some time or other been aware of this antinomy, but it is very likely that at the time we were not aware of the fact that we *were* aware of it.

For an example we may take the problem of organic or biological evolution. We

are not speaking of evolution in the broad sense which includes philosophy, speculation, and "crackpot" notions, but of organic evolution, which is an attempt to explain the diversity of plants and animals in the world. This is strictly a scientific problem. The chief objection of the theologian to organic evolution has always been the statement that the organisms "evolve by virtue of their own inherent power." This contradicts the creative and the sustaining power of God, it was said, and correctly so. But what the theologian is objecting to at this point is not something peculiar to the theory of evolution, nor is it merely the impious statement of some "atheistic scientist." Rather, the theologian is rebelling against the contradictory nature of his own existence and the existence of all the other creatures together with him in space and time; for each one of us as creatures is a true entity, is independent, apart from God, and is living and functioning by his own inherent power. Further, if we protest against our own existence, we are rebelling against the Almighty Creator who ordered our existence in space and time. Simultaneously, above all the mystery of our own existence stands the eternal and absolute truth: the source of all being is God the Creator whose almighty power upholds the creature in every moment of its existence, and the opposing truth: the creature received an immanent existence in space and time, in which the creature is a real entity and operates by virtue of his own inherent power. This contradiction must stand.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

It is this immanent existence of the world and its members which makes scientific study and investigation possible. Such

⁴ Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*, trans. Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 59.

research will uncover nothing creaturely about the object under investigation, nor will so much as the minutest trace of the Creator be disclosed. Instead it will appear that the object under investigation is a link in a chain of cause and effect. To all appearances, the object under consideration has an existence which is contingent upon its own power. It appears to exist in space and time without God. If this is taken as the final and complete answer, the student will become a materialist. A devout man, already in the grasp of the Word and enlightened by the Spirit, will in faith look beyond that which appears. He will think and pray reverently: "In the beginning God created. . . . In Him we live and move and are." Thus without any kind of ritualistic circumstances his science will be a devout worship.

This is true not only with respect to a study of the sciences, but also with respect to every phase of our life. We live by virtue of both, our *earthliness* (which includes cause and effect) and our *creatureliness* (which includes being bound to the Creator). Man lives by bread—but not by bread alone. Whatever else a man may be, whether unbeliever or atheist, he is every bit a creation of God. The unbelieving man may sit down to a meal perhaps with blasphemy on his lips. Yet the food he partakes will nourish him and support his body and life by virtue of the *fatherly, divine goodness and mercy* which the Creator bestows on all of His creatures. A devout man will first bow his head and ask God's blessing for the food. He prays, not in the expectation of receiving a greater bestowal of *fatherly, divine goodness and mercy*, not in the hope that the food will nourish him better. He already

has all that as God's creature, and in the food set before him. He bows his head to worship, pure and simple, to worship God the Creator. (This does not exclude the idea that some functional disorder might prompt a prayer for healthy functioning of the digestive and assimilative processes.)

So far in our discussion, cause and effect as a feature of our earthliness has been kept in the background. But actually, cause and effect may at any moment become a matter of life and death. A crash on the highway may result in brain damage, in a ruptured spleen or a slipped retina. Or a coronary thrombus may develop. Now we search desperately for someone who has knowledge of cause and effect as it applies to the structure and function of the body. In such emergencies we turn to the expert diagnostician, to the surgeon who handles the scalpel with skill and precision and who can stitch and tie delicate sutures. Only on second thought, if at all, do we ask if the surgeon is a Christian. If we have a choice, we may choose the non-Christian, not because he is a non-believer but because special aptitudes and capacities of reason, skill, and coordination have been bestowed on this man according to the fatherly wisdom of the Creator and the fatherly intentions toward him. Knowingly or unknowingly, in such an emergency we turn to the *fatherly, divine goodness and mercy* of God the Creator. God did not place man in a capricious world where he would have no chance, but in a world endowed with regularity and orderliness, which we may call cause and effect without becoming philosophical. This is all included in the reassuring promise made to Noah: "While the earth re-

mains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). Here we are assured that the orderliness and regularity of our world will continue; when we submit to a critical operation we can stake our life on cause and effect and expect recovery—God willing. Always it must be—God being willing. *He stands above cause and effect.* This is the philosophy of the Revelation to John, as well as the whole of the New Testament, with respect to history, and this may be expanded to include cause and effect in general, also in scientific processes.

REASON AFTER THE FALL

Science as such is not godless or anti-christian. There have always been in every church some who have held that science is godless, antichristian, presumptuous, and arrogant. With this there has often been linked an anti-intellectual attitude. The rapid expansion of technology and science has so "recolored our mentality" (Whitehead) that this antagonism toward science has largely abated, though vestiges of it still remain. The presumptive arrogance which some Christians ascribe to science is directed against supposed excesses of reason.

The Fall narrative in Genesis 3 cannot be pressed for detail. In the Confessions the fall of the first man is stated as a fact with sparse explication. Similarly, the pre-Fall, or original, state of man is stated as a fact, and again explication is sparse. The reality of sin is the sinfulness which is ours because as Adam's offspring we share in his sin. The horrible viciousness of sin is described at length and from every angle, and sin is characterized as an un-

avoidable necessity of fallen man and as his enslavement and imprisonment. Man in the present situation is, on the one hand, creature, and on the other, sinner; on the one hand, he is a creature with respect to his whole being, and on the other, "in the sight of God original sin, like a spiritual leprosy, has thoroughly and entirely poisoned and corrupted human nature" (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, 1, 6). Daily the Creator gives man his reason, and yet it is corrupted through and through—a gift of God, and yet unable to decide in the favor of the good. The confessional writings do not confine the creative activity of God to the pristine state, nor do they confine sin to the individual deed, or to only a part of the being, so that some human part of the person can be excluded from the general corruption. Every man is *wholly* and *totally* creature and sinner at one and the same time.⁵

Reason is a daily gift of God, and yet it is unable to decide in favor of the good. That is the present situation. Lutheran theology ascribes presumptuous pride and arrogance to individuals and to groups who substitute reason and processes of reason for divine revelation. In fact, the Christian church in general repudiates all forms of rationalism which regard human reason as the source of faith, and rightly condemns its proponents as being outside the pale of the church. The legitimate and necessary place of reason in theology has been indicated by Lutheran dogmatists. Likewise the theological misuse of reason in its various manifestations is treated at length. The very nature

⁵ This development is extracted from Schlink, pp. 38—48.

of Lutheran theology compels the dogmatist to stress the negative side in treating reason. For reason becomes an intruder if it is introduced at that point in theology where the Word and faith are supreme.⁶

The Bible, is not, however, anti-intellectual; the Bible does not disparage education and knowledge, but accepts them approvingly, the sinful condition of man notwithstanding. Every man is *wholly* and *totally* creature and sinner at one and the same time. We cannot evade either the unity or this duality of our being as it is in the present situation. Conceptually we can distinguish between man's creatureliness and his corruptedness when, for instance, we are engaged in a discussion such as this. But empirically this distinction cannot be made. Whatever the particular aspect of man may be which we take under observation, it will always be *totally corrupt* and *totally creaturely*. Only God can distinguish the one from the other. The nature of man is not subject to abstraction.

If theologians speak of the mind and will of man as capacities or faculties, the significance placed upon them is nonetheless in terms of the expression of total man. It may bear repetition that the Christian theologian always speaks of the entire human being when he treats particular aspects of expression, because the Scriptures do not present man in any abstraction.

Mention was made . . . that the mind and will of man was free before the Fall. Of course, God alone is free in the absolute sense; however, man shared God's freedom within the limitations of his crea-

⁶ See John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), pp. 90—97.

tureliness. Consequently man's mind possessed a clear apprehension of the good, and his will desired nothing but the good. Man's fall radically changed his condition in this respect also. However, when the Christian Church speaks of the mind and will of man under sin, the meaning is not that sin has substantively changed man; the change in the mind and will of man is a qualitative change. Under the condition of sin man is completely unable to apprehend spiritual truths (truths which the Holy Spirit works in man), such as are conveyed in the message of the Gospel, nor is man disposed willingly to accept them. (1 Cor. 2:14)⁷

CULTURE

While man in his corruption cannot "receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him" (1 Cor. 2:14), he can perceive and apprehend the things of the physical world around him. The command, "fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion" (Gen. 1:28), and the virtual command "to till the ground" (Gen. 3:23) still stand. The fact that man is creaturely, and that he is so commanded, implies that God has endowed him with the capacities of reason and mind and will, and strength of body, *to subdue, to rule, and to till*, in the widest possible sense of these terms. Living in the present day and age we should expand the terms *subdue, rule, till* to include the achievement of all that is great, aspiring, noble, and humanitarian, as the case may be, in the arts, the sciences, and the crafts; we should include all that comes to mind when we think of

⁷ *What, Then, Is Man? A Symposium of Theology, Psychology, and Psychiatry*. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 56—57. See also pp. 53, 158—59, and Appendix C, pp. 316—21.

culture. Helmut Thielicke has the following to say:

Despite all the questionableness of our nature, here is this word being proclaimed to us: "Fill the earth and subdue it." Now I do not believe that we can any longer interpret this to mean a tremendous glorification of man. For, after all, we are not to rule and subdue the earth because we stand *above* the other creatures, but only because we stand *under* God and are privileged to be his viceroys. But being a viceroy of the Creator is something different from being a creature who makes of himself a god or at least a superman.

If I am not mistaken, this also gives us the clue to the meaning of all *culture*. For, after all, culture is the conquest, the management, the cultivation of the world. When fruitful farm land is made out of a desert and when human settlements arise in the primeval forests, this means that the seal of man is stamped upon the world. Every sheltering home and every garden is a victory won by man over the surging elements.

We therefore dare not think that culture always arises only from strife and separation from God, that *hubris* and human autonomy are inherent in it by nature. No, on the contrary, it exists under the blessing and justification of a divine command . . . one of the goals of God's creation is contained within culture and all that is great and aspiring.⁸

Under the condition of sin man's ability to apprehend spiritual truths is lost and he cannot decide in favor of good. As to what happened to man's mind and reason in other respects we have no precise infor-

mation. But even after the Fall, God is not miserly with respect to the mental capacities which He not only *gives* to man daily but also *preserves*, in particular those mental capacities and processes of reason which are employed in the extension of scientific investigation and in the development of technology. We need only to recall the achievement of the space programs of both the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Man is placing his mark in outer space and Christians understand this as taking place *under the command and blessing of God and Jesus Christ, the creating Word*. At the same time the failures that have attended these programs are gracious hints that man is still man.

By virtue of his God-given role in this world, man has authority to search out the secrets of the atom and those of outer space, to probe the outer crust of the earth and the inner regions, as well as to seek to discover the mystery of life. All the marvelous achievements in surgery, in medicine both curative and preventative, in industrial and agricultural chemistry, and much, much more, man is permitted to do. In surgery, replacement of natural but diseased or damaged organs and parts by fabrications is becoming all but routine. For days at a time, hearts which have lost their beat have been revived again and again by electric shock and heart massage, so that the disturbing thought arises that man can even delay the coming of death. He can — under the blessing of God. God gave to man, the creature, the world with all of its discoverable resources and intramundane relationships. Even after the Fall, God remains faithful to Himself and to His creature and does not withdraw the

⁸ Helmut Thielicke, *How the World Began*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. 67—68.

gift given to the creature, man. God gave to man reason and senses with which to discover the natural resources and the inner relationships. Even after the Fall, God preserves reason and the powers of reason.

PIRATED KNOWLEDGE

How freely and how fully God placed His creation under the rule of man becomes most clear when we consider how the fatherly, divinely good and merciful intentions of the Creator towards man and the created world have been vitiated by man's struggle for power.⁹

Any principle, fact, or knowledge which is revealed as a result of pure scientific research is amoral. It is without moral implications until it is put to use, in which case an ethical judgment must be made; for knowledge in function is morally dynamic. Then a choice must be made, either for good or for evil. But since the Fall man instinctively decides for self-aggrandizement; he engages in a struggle for power and prestige. Man uses his knowledge of the laws of nature, and his understanding of how to utilize these laws, to oppress and to enslave people who are still ignorant of such knowledge. It matters little whether this struggle for power is of a military or of an economic nature, in the end it will result in the degradation and disfranchisement of human beings, each one created in the image of God. The victims of this struggle, on the lowest rung of the ladder, will be subjected to inhumanities, famine, neglect, and other shameful abuses by those who are at the top.

This is all a continuation of the rebellion against God begun in the Garden

⁹ See, for example, Thieliicke, pp. 153—57.

(Gen. 3:6). Man in his rebellion against God cannot touch God directly. God is transcendent. But he *can* pierce the apple of His eye, "the least of these My brethren" who are on the lowest rung of the ladder. Ever since the Fall the door for evil to enter has stood wide open. In Revelation the satanic dragon (Rev. 12: 7-13), the Antichrist (Rev. 13:1-10), the prophet of Antichrist (Rev. 13:11-18), and Babylon, the great harlot (Revelation 17), are depicted as taking over with the idolatry of sex, fears, tumult and utter confusion, pirated knowledge and power, and mass action against God and His Anointed (Psalm 2; Rev. 12:13-17). In this sense the world as it is is no longer God's world. It is indeed Satan's world ruled by the powers of darkness (Rev. 12:12 b). "God intended man not merely to exist, but to be the image of God also toward the rest of the world He created with the capacity to be its master for its purposes."¹⁰ Man, however, abdicated his masterhood of the created world under God, in favor of a masterhood of the world under the powers of darkness.

Man "cannot serve two masters" but is always subject to one. Either he serves God and enjoys the liberty of a child of God as a son and heir, enjoying free access to God, or he is independent of God, subject to his own drives and urges, and the slave of the powers of darkness. Thus the original intentions and purposes of God for man and the created world are vitiated; not only man but the whole cosmos became "subjected to futility" (Rom. 8:20).

¹⁰ "No Need to Fear Synthesis of Life," *The Lutheran Layman*, XXXVII (April 1966), 1, col. 5. The entire position paper on "The Christian World View and the New Era in Science" is reprinted here.

Yet God respects the freedom, the honor, the masterhood of the created world, and the mental capacities to subdue the world which He gave to man at the beginning, and He in no wise restricts them.

Man is insecure in the position which he has arrogated to himself. He has cut himself loose from God, but he cannot forget God. The witnessing church will not let him forget. Man rejects what God "in these last days . . . has spoken to us by a Son" (Heb. 1:2), and waits for something more spectacular; he waits for something which will at least measure up to one or the other of his own pretensions. The trumpets of Revelation warn, the bowls of wrath pour, but man neither hears nor sees. For God is silent, as far as obdurate man is concerned. So man makes a negative profession and says, "God is dead."

Moreover, man is an enigma to himself. He is afraid of his own potentialities. Knowledge is no longer a problem to modern man. It keeps on advancing—almost automatically—and man knows how to secure knowledge by seeking and learning. Modern man is so powerful that he can blow up our planet. He is afraid of what he can do.

He is afraid of his knowledge because he feels he is not equal to it, because he is too fragile and brittle to carry such a weight. And he is also afraid of his own kind. He has the uneasy feeling that all his knowledge and power is leading him into the unknown and that there will be no stopping there, no turning back, and no certain direction.¹¹

What is more, the mind of man, with a capacity whose limits are nowhere in

sight, triggered by its scientific imagination, not only sets the pace for the advancement of knowledge but is itself constantly unfolding and developing in the process. Thus the mind of man is far out in front of the actual advance, probing and searching for new breakthroughs. Man has liberated the mind through the use of the electric computer from much of the drudgery and routine formerly connected with research so that the effectiveness of a brilliant mind has been extended, inasmuch as it can devote itself to more important work than routine, and thus increase its efficiency. Nevertheless, man may well harbor "the uneasy feeling that all his knowledge and power is leading him into the unknown and that there will be no stopping there, no turning back, and no certain direction."¹² At this point we need to be reminded that knowledge as such is not the source of the fears and misgivings to which Thielicke refers above, but *pirated* knowledge is. The vitiation of God's original intentions and purposes for man and the created world gives rise to these fears. *Pirated* knowledge and power is evil. Knowledge as such is good and is a gift of God.

RESOLUTION OF PIRATED KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

The vitiation of God's intentions and purposes for man and the created world is in process of being resolved even now. To keep us on an even keel we must see this disturbing problem to its end.

In Psalm 2, God is presented as "He who sits in the heavens." In the Revelation to John, God is given "the name which (with one exception) does not occur elsewhere

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 155—57.

¹² Ibid., p. 155.

in the New Testament: The *Pantocrator* (the Almighty), the Eternal One who bears sway over all things."¹³ John the Seer does not make a clumsy attempt to describe the majesty of God, but almost always follows Psalm 2, and writes, "a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne" (Rev. 4:2), or, "I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it" (Rev. 20:11), or something similar. In sublime majesty, undisturbed by the turmoil of earth, "the *Pantocrator*, the Eternal One who bears sway over all things," sits enthroned above all earthly events, but He does not Himself intervene in the conflict. God's judgment does not consist in sending a thunderbolt from heaven to destroy man, who has vitiated His original purposes and intentions toward the creation. Instead He lets the original order stand. God's judgment consists in leaving man to his chosen role, to his own wretchedness; God's judgment consists in *compelling* man to pursue his chosen road to the end and to go through every phase of its terrible curse. "God gave them up" (Rom. 1:24). He leaves them to themselves, in His fearful judgment. There is nothing more terrible than man left to himself, as David well knew (2 Sam. 24:14). For all the instincts and energies which were previously directed toward God are now directed upon himself, and he himself becomes the victim of his own self-seeking pride and his pirated knowledge and power. Man must serve God, if not positively then negatively. The love and the grace of God are defenseless and suffer all things. But grace rejected is judgment.

¹³ Hanns Lilje, *The Last Book of the Bible*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 19.

Meanwhile the church is continuously praying: "Thy kingdom come." And God's kingdom *comes*. Amid the world's anguish and distress, amid the hail of bombs and mass murders, confusion and disorder, God is building His kingdom. Under the deft art and energy of the Holy Spirit, who is active all the time, everywhere, and who never ceases until the work for which He has been sent is finished, the Kingdom comes. Under the executive administration of Jesus Christ, who has first-hand knowledge of the depth of human existence, who left no foe of righteousness unconquered, who was therefore highly exalted, God's kingdom comes and is consummated.

The great epiphany follows, which John describes only indirectly: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it; from His presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne" (Rev. 20:11-12a). Before the unveiled majesty of the Almighty earth and sky, scarred and defaced by pirated knowledge and power, disappear. Before the transcendent majesty of the living God even the dead must live, so they arise. They are there in countless numbers, "in that vast open space of spiritual emptiness in which no human being could breathe or stand," desegregated, "great and small," without any earthly and historical differences, bound together by one thing only: that they are before the throne and the transcendent majesty of Him who sits upon the throne.

History is ended. Pirated power is ended. Cause and effect is ended. All evil powers have been destroyed. Earth and sky, the stage of pirated knowledge, have passed away. "Only the majesty of

Life remains, which is God Himself, and He will be all in all." ¹⁴

HISTORY AND THE FLOW OF TIME FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT POINT OF VIEW

Historians and historical philosophers present history as a development from age to age and from moment to moment, each step always coming nearer and nearer to the highest possible development and evolution, provided that the guiding idea is belief in progress. Today then determines tomorrow; and today was determined by yesterday. Cause and effect, as he observes it, engages the thought of the historian.

The New Testament view of history and the flow of time is an altogether different one: "The end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:17). It would be a serious mistake to date this end or to be misled by speculations which have in the past brought discredit to Christian hope. One thing we know with solid certainty:

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 255—56.

"The end of all things is at hand." This end gives direction to everything. Everything must be interpreted with this end in view.

So the directional lines do not run from the present out to some ephemeral, evolutionary goal somewhere in the remote future, but they run from the end, that is, *the consummation of the Kingdom*, to the present and determine the present. Hence, from this point of view history does *not* repeat itself. We need to take the end of this present world form and age as seriously as we take our own death. "You know what hour it is" (Rom. 13:11). "Keep your ear to the ground," Paul says. Every political movement, every social upheaval, every new scientific development forces the question upon us: What light does the end shed on this event, this discovery, this new thought? The minute hand of the clock of this age is steadily moving on and is nearing the point at which the clock will strike twelve.

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