

more frequent in this essay than in any other. For example: "The Biblical critics, whatever reconstructions they devise, can never be crudely proved wrong. St Mark is dead. When they meet St Peter there will be more pressing matters to discuss" (p. 161).

"The Seeing Eye," an essay in response to the Russian astronaut's failure to find God in space, includes this glimpse of his personal ground for faith: "I never had the experience of looking for God. It was the other way round; He was the hunter (or so it seemed to me) and I was the deer. He stalked me like a redskin, took unerring aim, and fired. And I am very thankful that that is how the first (conscious) meeting occurred. It forearms one against subsequent fears that the whole thing was only wish fulfilment. Something one didn't wish for can hardly be that" (p. 169).

To read *Christian Reflections* or any of the other Lewis works that I know is to be in communication with a cultivated and adroit and urbane mind, a mind disciplined to make precise distinctions, a mind skilled in logic and orderly analysis. Lest these qualities in any way suggest detachment and remoteness, let me quickly add that it is a mind that reveals itself in expression that is personal, genial, ingratiating. And one must feel, I think, even when not fully persuaded by its logic, that above all it is an honest mind dedicated to the glorifying of God and the salvation of men.

Yet I put down *Christian Reflections* with a touch of nostalgia, a vague feeling of disappointment, for its author addresses a world that is gone, a world that now seems curiously remote from us, a world not yet engaged by the most pressing problems of these days. I fear that many of the questions on which he focused his impressive intellectual resources may seem only academic to young readers. And to many older ones his obvious faith that sweet reasonableness can lead us to the solutions we require may stir up more than a little envy.

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In Defense of Secular History

RONALD L. NUMBERS

GOD AND MAN IN HISTORY

By George Edgar Shankel

Southern Publishing Association, Nashville, 1967 268 pp \$5.95

The historian seeks to understand human activity in the past. He is not satisfied merely with establishing a correct chronological sequence of events; he attempts to identify the causes and effects of these events, whether they be of a social, political, economic, or psychological nature. The only restriction placed on these explanations is that they be supported by evidence available to other scholars. For this reason historians do not generally write about the influence of divine and satanic forces. They may believe that such powers actually exist, but the absence of evidence usually prevents inclusion of such considerations in scholarly histories.

God and Man in History is a protest by George Edgar Shankel, a Seventh-day Adventist teacher of history, against this practice of excluding the supernatural from historical explanations. The first part, described in the preface as "an analysis and evaluation from a Christian point of view of various human philosophies of history promoted at different times during the past few centuries" (p. 8), is essentially a polemic against rationalism, secularism, humanism, communism, and the "doctrine of inevitable progress." The historical treatment of these ideas is generally cursory and denunciatory. I will focus on the second part of the book, in which the role of the supernatural in history is discussed.

Shankel believes that divine and satanic forces have influenced the course of historical events so frequently and so fundamentally that they constitute the "mainspring of action in history" (p. 7). He fears, however, that historians have been so preoccupied with the search for empirical evidence in support of their various theses that they have overlooked these vital spiritual sources. Consequently, their histories have been shallow and inadequate.

Shankel fails to recognize that his approach might just as easily produce superficial history. If a historian is convinced that Satan always acts to thwart "the best effort of God" (p. 200), he is likely to think that the *real* cause of some evil phenomenon can be explained without tiresome research, but with a simple ascription to diabolic influence. This type of explanation was actually used in a recent work by another Seventh-day Adventist writer, who attempted to account for the widespread acceptance of evolution in the mid-nineteenth century. The idea of evolution became popular at that particular time, explains the author, because Satan wanted to use it in his battle against the early advent movement. No documentary evidence is cited to support this claim of satanic intervention.¹

The deterministic overtones of Shankel's interpretation of history are likewise disturbing. God intervenes to ensure that His predetermined plan for this world will not be foiled by man's misuse of his "free will" (pp. 182, 198), but we are assured by Shankel that God would prefer to grant us absolute freedom if we could only be trusted to make the right decisions (p. 203). Shankel does not resolve the contradiction between his statement that "God cannot deny the privilege of free will and be consistent with Himself" (p. 185) and his belief that God intervenes whenever His predetermined plans are threatened. "The only question," he says, "is how long and to what extent God can allow man to carry out his human designs and imperfect wisdom without endangering seriously His ultimate plan" (p. 198). This is indeed a strange conception of freedom; but without it, divine interference would be difficult to justify.

God's interventions are supposed to take place in two ways: "(1) indirectly, by making the forces and laws operating in the world the expression of divine will; (2) directly, when God by supernatural intervention causes matters to take a different course than they would in the natural course of events" (pp. 193-194). The crucial problem confronting Shankel's ideal Christian historian is to discover when these interventions have occurred. As the only reliable source in this area is divine revelation, and it throws light on relatively few historical events, most historians have no evidence whatsoever to substantiate claims of providential action. Therefore, even

though they may have a deep personal belief that God is guiding the affairs of this world, they refrain from unsupported speculations.

Since Shankel agrees that the plans of Providence cannot be known "except as they were revealed in the prophetic word" (p. 69), we naturally would expect all his examples of divine intervention to come from this source alone. This expectation is reinforced by his statement that "no responsible historian should have the temerity to assign providential action to specific historical events" (pp. 203-204). Having assumed Shankel to be a responsible historian, I was surprised to find him indulging in the same kind of speculation he condemns. He suggests, for instance, that the English defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the miracle of the Marne in World War One, and the Union victory at Gettysburg are all examples of God's overruling in history (p. 204). Such conjectures tell us more about the author's Protestant, Allied, and Northern biases than about divine manipulation.

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When Shankel tries to show that many of the turning points of history can be understood only in the light of the principle that God intervenes when individuals or nations abuse their moral freedom, he provides more dubious illustrations of divine action, such as the following (p. 192):

Charles I of England abused his royal prerogative by curtailing the freedom of his subjects, and by becoming an absolutist he profaned his sense of moral responsibility. There remained no choice but for the people to reassert their lost freedom and themselves assume the sovereignty betrayed by their king. When the sovereign power thus assumed by the Cromwellian regime exceeded its rightful moral prerogatives and assumed the liberties guaranteed constitutionally to the people and to Parliament, it too was forced to capitulate to the higher moral will of a sovereign people.

This interpretation comes dangerously close to equating the will of the people with God's will. If this rule were applied consistently, we might have to conclude that the successful people's revolutions in Russia, China, and Cuba during this century were favored with divine support, Shankel's strictures of communism notwithstanding.

A secondary issue raised by Shankel concerns the propriety of passing moral judgments on individuals and ideas from the past, a subject of interest to many historians. Christians who feel a duty to condemn evil because they possess in the Law of God a standard for making seemingly valid judgments would do well to remember the biblical admonition to "judge not, that ye be not judged." They should also be aware of the hazards moral judgments pose to the writing of good history. Taking past actions out of context and judging them by present values is clearly unhistorical. The historian's goal is to understand — not to praise or condemn — the past. Judging has a dangerous tendency to obstruct understanding.

Shankel's treatment of this question is not very lucid. He devotes a chapter to "Moral Judgment in History" but fails to distinguish adequately between the moral judgments made by historians and the execution of divine judgment, two distinct acts. Furthermore, he tends to take an ambiguous position toward the first kind of judgment. While advocating judgments based on absolute biblical principles (pp. 124-125), he warns the historian not to "take upon himself the prerogatives of God" (p. 131) and cautions against offering "judgment on social systems that may ulti-

mately be used of God" (p. 203). In practice, Shankel has no reservations about passing judgment — even on social systems that may ultimately be used of God. For example, he describes the present confrontation between Christianity (i.e., capitalism) and communism as "a part of the larger struggle between good and evil for the souls of men" (p. 120).

Karl Löwith, a Christian philosopher of history, has correctly concluded that it is impossible to impose "on history a reasoned order or [to draw out] the working of God. . . . To the critical mind, neither a providential design nor a natural law of progressive development is discernible in the tragic human comedy of all times."² The Christian interpretation of history is derived from revelation alone. Since revelation is strictly a matter of faith, historians should not expect either to verify or to falsify it with historical evidence. Here lies the fallacy in Shankel's book, which was written primarily as a text for college history majors. The student is led to believe that he can and should find evidence of God's (or Satan's) hand in the study of history. Because such discoveries are unlikely, he will probably become disappointed, if not cynical.

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Although I question the legitimacy of any Christian approach to history that would have historians searching for unrevealed evidence of supernatural activity, I do recognize the possible value of having an overall interpretation of history based on Christian beliefs. Patrick Gardiner's comments on the Marxist philosophy apply equally to the philosophy of the Christian. "Theories of this kind," he says, "may indeed be regarded in some respects as 'pointers' to types of historical material which may prove relevant to the understanding of a particular historical situation, from a certain angle and for certain purposes. . . . Their significance lies in their suggestive power, their directive importance."³ Used in this way, the Christian philosophy could guide the historian in his search for explanations of the past, but it would not make available any supernatural explanations.

Essentially, Shankel wants to abandon the training of professional historians in Christian colleges in favor of a program that would produce historically oriented theologians trying to answer "the great questions of human destiny" by the aid of faith and revelation. These new "historicists" would be modern prophets, for Shankel believes that "we can hardly expect society to support history as a useful branch of knowledge if it cannot . . . give some insight into future developments" (p. 14). He does not see, as did the late historian Carl Becker, that "the value of history is . . . moral; by liberalizing the mind, by deepening the sympathies, by fortifying the will, it enables us to control, not society, but ourselves; it prepares us to live more humanely in the present, and to meet rather than to foretell, the future."⁴

The Christian historian knows by faith that God influences the affairs of men, just as the Christian scientist knows that God is controlling the operations of nature. But God's hand is invisible, and we must not accuse the historian or the scientist of impiety when he cannot discern it. The teaching of secular history in Christian colleges is as defensible as the teaching of secular physics or physiology. The historian makes his contribution to Christian education not by teaching a peculiar history but by enabling students to learn in a Christian environment and by witnessing for Christ in and out of the classroom.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- 1 JEROME L. CLARK, *Intellectual Movements* (volume three of three volumes entitled *1844*. Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1968), p. 173.
- 2 KARL LOWITH, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. vii.
- 3 PATRICK GARDINER, *The Nature of Historical Explanation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 112.
- 4 CARL BECKER, as quoted in DEXTER PERKINS and JOHN L. SNELL, *The Education of Historians in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), p. 2.

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“Might” Never Makes Right

EDWARD N. LUGENBEAL

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE

By Bernard Ramm

W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 368 pp

\$4.00

Fifteen years after its publication date *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* remains in many respects unique, significant, and, for Adventists, particularly relevant to much of our current discussion on science and religion.

The book differs from most of the apologetic literature on “Genesis and science,” because the author, Bernard Ramm, is a competent theologian who is also well informed in science. He is simultaneously a defender of the “fundamentalist” Protestant view of Scripture as fully authoritative and unerring, and a defender of the integrity of scientific inquiry and the validity of its results. In fact, probably the major point Ramm wishes to make in this book is that, contrary to what many conservative Christians have said, it is possible for the conscientious Christian scientist to accept much of modern biology, anthropology, and geology, and still believe in the Bible as infallible and verbally inspired. On the one hand, the book contains the usual conservative polemic against both secular non-Christian skepticism and liberal Christian skepticism regarding fiat creationism and supernaturalism, though it is a gentle polemic. On the other hand, Ramm vigorously defends most of the conclusions of modern science and roundly chastises the “hyperorthodox” for their obscurantism in scientific matters.

In research for this book I discovered that there are two traditions in Bible and science both stemming from the developments of the nineteenth century. There is the ignoble tradition that has taken a most unwholesome attitude toward science and has used arguments and procedures not in the better traditions of established scholarship. There has been and is a noble tradition in Bible and science, and this is the