

Sangre de Cristo Sem. 1984

SOJOURNERS, a left wing periodical, published [note added by GHC: No. When they saw its disclaimers they refused to publish the review] a seriously mistaken review of the work of Carl F.H. Henry. This included distortions of the view of Gordon H. Clark. SOJOURNERS refused to publish disclaimers by the two authors. The following is one of these disclaimers.

Dr. Jack Rogers, professor of Philosophical Theology at Fuller Seminary, has written a review of Carl Henry's God, Revelation, and Authority. In it he not only attacks Carl Henry, but incidentally he makes frequent mention of me. Carl Henry is quite able to defend himself. He is the most influential evangelical in the world today. Hence I shall try to restrict my remarks to those passages in which Rogers mentions my name. A sharp separation between Henry and me, however, is difficult because (1) Rogers repeatedly states that Henry accepts my apologetic principles, and (2) his criticism passes from one of us to the other, not only in paragraph, but in single sentences, so that I cannot avoid all mention of my distinguished colleague. Nevertheless I shall be brief.

Although as a professor I should be gratified if my teaching has been of any assistance to so great a thinker as Carl Henry, the first point of my rejoinder to Rogers is his attribution to Henry and to me of certain theses neither of us accepts. Rogers writes, "Henry's emphasis when dealing with personal revelation is in fact a defense of natural theology." Not only is this statement incorrect, but as included in Roger's material it produces confusion. If it were true, Roger should never have claimed that Clark's thought influenced Henry. Even an unintelligent reader can hardly miss my rejections of natural theology. They are found in nearly every one of my publications. I shall cite only one: Thales to Dewey, (pp. 274-278). Such confusion as assigning to Henry both natural theology and even a moderate influence from me does little to stimulate a belief in Roger's sense of logical consistency.

This confusion continues two paragraphs later. Rogers writes, "He comes down hard on evangelical apologists of the evidential variety who seek to demonstrate the existence of God ... from the sensorily perceived world. Henry flatly denies the validity of evidentialist apologetics ... This demonstrates that when forced to choose, Henry follows Gordon Clark in apologetics rather than B.B. Warfield." This statement I believe is true. But it could not be true if Roger's ascription of natural theology to Henry were true. If one is logical, one cannot make both ascriptions. If one is not logical, everything is permitted.

Besides the confusion of logical inconsistency Rogers makes substantial blunders in interpretation. I do not want to put words in Carl Henry's mouth. Nothing I say binds him. But there are at least two serious misunderstandings in Roger's material. To quote the first: "Henry following Clark ... contends that the human mind was not essentially harmed by the fall into sin."

What does Rogers mean by "essentially"? The word is ambiguous. If "harmed essentially" means a demotion of Adam from a human status to that of an irrational animal, I am willing to say that they did not happen. Adam remained human. Frequently the word essential refers to a definition. John Doe, even if one of his legs were amputated, would remain essentially human because he would still satisfy the definition of a human being. Similarly the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that man was totally divested of the divine image. If Rogers believes the doctrine of total depravity, he cannot consistently object to saying that the fall did not essentially harm man's mind, unless he means something other than definitionally. But he gives no explanation of what he means. The result is that when someone objects to Rogers, Rogers can always reply, 'But I didn't mean that by my word essentially.' Since the word has no clear meaning in Roger's sentence, the following remarks are forced to ignore it.

Rogers cites Henry's God, Revelation, and Authority (Vol I, pp. 225-228). There is nothing in these pages that could properly be described as "several extreme implications ... that the human mind was ... not harmed by the fall." Indeed, Henry defends himself against Gerstner's criticism that "presuppositionalist theology exaggerates the noetic consequences of the fall." Is it not strange that one critic accuses Henry of eliminating the effects of the fall and another critic charges him with exaggerating them? As for "following Clark" one should note that I have enumerated some of the noetic effects of sin. Theologians are content to use the phrase without giving specifications. But in addition to discussing the divine image in general I have identified a few of the noetic effects of sin. There are other effects, not usually called noetic: these are beside the point here. The noetic effects include mistakes in arithmetic when trying to balance one's bank account as also the various fallacies one falls into when trying to argue. Had there been no fall, man may not have invented calculus, but all his additions would have been correct. More generally, misunderstandings and confusion are noetic effects of sin. Whether these indicate that "the human mind was not essentially harmed" can be answered only after the ambiguous word is defined. Furthermore, these "extreme theological implications" do not come from "this Idealist philosophical position," but from exegesis of the inerrant

Scripture.

There is a second serious misunderstanding. Rogers says, “Henry, following Clark, asserts that unless we can know central things in exactly the same way God knows them, we can have no knowledge at all.” This statement is completely false. Rogers did not and cannot quote any passage from any of my publications that makes such an assertion. If he had read my published material, he would have quoted some passages that explicitly deny what he asserts. I do not mean to suggest that Dr. Rogers would agree with my view if he knows what it is. He simply does not know what it is. What he actually reported is false.

Though I wished to keep this rejoinder brief, its readers deserve a short statement of my view on this point. First, for God is eternal, since he never learned anything, since he is supertemporal, his thinking is not a temporal process. The way God knows is often called intuitional. I do not object to the word. Maybe instantaneously would be a better word. Probably the best word is eternal. At any rate, one's way of thinking is temporally we need time to draw inferences; we often forget and then remember. Hence Dr. Rogers blunders badly when he says, “Clark asserts that unless we can know central things in exactly the way God knows them, we can have no knowledge at all.” This blunder is in keeping with the previously noted confusion. Now, second, since God is omniscient, since he knows all truth, since indeed the Bible, which I hold to be inerrant in epistemology as in all also, says, “O Lord God of truth (Psa. 31:5), “the Spirit of truth” (I John 5:6), and since the Westminster Confession says, “God, who is truth itself,” (I, iv,) since all this, it is clear that God knows everything without exception. Hence if we know anything, we must know something God knows. Unless we know something God knows, we know nothing, for there is nothing else to be known. Our way of knowing is different from God's, whose knowing is not a temporal process at all, but the object known is identical. If we 'know' something God does not know, we have neither knowledge nor truth.

There are more than these two obvious misunderstandings in Rogers' criticism. I shall speak only of one more. “Clark and Henry want something from the Bible – certain, systematic, scientific knowledge.” Clearly Mr. Rogers hasn't read my mimeograph The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God. In it I analyze the laboratory methods used in physics. Far from supposing that the Bible provides us with any of the laws of physics – where in the Bible is there a differential equation? Where in the Bible are there premises from which a law of physics can be deduced? - I argue that no law of physics describes natural motions. If any did, Einstein would never have discarded Newton. Science is tentative

and changing. The laws used today will soon be dropped, just as the laws I was taught in my university physics courses have now been replaced by others. In Horizons of Science (ed. Carl Henry, p. 268) I quote Einstein: “We know nothing about it at all. Our knowledge is but the knowledge of school-children, ... we shall know a little more than we do now. But the real nature of things – that we shall never know, never.”

What Rogers says about me on this point is just plain false. I wish he would read my books, and understand them, before criticizing them. This present rejoinder limits itself to some of his misunderstandings of my position. Perhaps later I shall examine the substance of his position.