

1983

Review: Stress in the Family

Ronald E. Hawkins

Liberty University, rehawkin@liberty.edu

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Hawkins, Ronald E., "Review: Stress in the Family" (1983). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 31.
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The more technical reply is that Plato anachronistically denied Aristotle's view that science arrives at fixed truth. For Plato science is always tentative. The scientists of 1983 have discarded every law of physics that my physics professors taught me 60 years ago in the university. The rate of change seems to be continually increasing. Very likely by A.D. 2000 the presently accepted laws will have been largely replaced. Why then should we take today's science, much less the science of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, as fixed truth?

One naturally supposes that Ramm would accurately recount the views of his favorite professor. But his zeal to defend him against all attack impedes his pleasant memories of Basel. "All the accusations that Barth is an irrationalist...are wrong (p.76). This includes my own book, *Karl Barth's Theological Method*, stamped with the seal of the Evangelical Theological Society and published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company in 1963. Now, this review might give the impression that I have a grudge against Ramm. On the contrary, our contacts, while disappointingly infrequent over the years, have always been most friendly. I wish to thank him for his kind words about me in this very volume. But it happens that I am as much opposed to Barth as he is favorable. Therefore when he writes: "Evangelicals and others have accused Barth of being an irrationalist. He is accused of flouting the law of contradiction" (p.79), and when he says that they are all wrong, it seems to me proper to reply.

If Ramm in his present book has mentioned Barth's view of paradox, I missed it. Yet Barth, when he first penetrated the American scene, was using the concept of paradox rather enthusiastically. This denial of the law of contradiction is Barth's first norm for doing theology. His initial sentence is, "The very minimum postulate of freedom from contradiction is acceptable

only upon the very limited interpretation, by the scientific theorist upon the scarcely tolerable one, that theology will not assert an irremovability in principle of the 'contradictions' which it is bound to make good" (*Church Dogmatics*, I,1,p.8). His well-known view that God is "Totally Other" is also an indication that God does not think in valid forms as we (sometimes) do. Nor does his peculiar view of the image of God in man acquit him of the accusation of irrationalism. The most that can be said in Barth's favor is his admission that he had earlier made too free a use of paradox. But such an acknowledgement is not a sufficient defense, for even later Barth defended a (smaller) number of contradictions.

Ramm himself, a bit later, seems to admit that Barth was an irrationalist. If there were no contradictions in the Bible, it would "materialize the Holy Scripture [and rob it] of its spiritual and dynamic quality" (p.149). Well, one must admit that self-contradiction can be dynamic.

Toward the end of Ramm's paragraph, he seems to identify *rational* with a deduction from nonbiblical sources, rather than with a use of valid arguments generally. He has also previously said, "If something external to the Word of God is necessary to establish the Word of God as true, then it is greater than the Word of God" (p.75). With this, in opposition to empirical epistemology and evidential apologetics, I am in enthusiastic agreement. But this is quite different from justifying fallacious arguments.

Then, furthermore, it seems to me that Ramm as well as Barth compromises God's omnipotence. Consider: "For all...who still maintain that Holy Scripture is in some objective sense the Word of God, Genesis 1-3 pose a very difficult problem.... There was obviously no human observer...there was neither writing nor historians nor archives. No other documents or corroborated data" (p.100). Obviously this denies that God had the

power to tell Moses that he had created the world. Another denial of omnipotence is the idea that God could not prevent the sinful apostles from making false statements. In fact, it almost seems that a sinner can never say anything true: "The sinful human mind does not reflect the pure Word of God" (p.111). Worse yet, the Bible is human in parallel with the sinful humanity of Christ: "One must affirm that the Son of God took actual sinful humanity in the incarnation and also that the Scriptures are vulnerable to error" (p.127). This parallel between an erroneous Bible and a sinful Christ is not Christianity. Ramm on this page does not clearly indicate that this is only Barth's opinion and not his own. The introductory words are, "There are certain gains to Barth's doctrine of the humanity of the Scriptures." The parallelism seems to be one of the gains.

I do not thus criticize Ramm in anger, envy, or in academic triumph, but in deep sadness. Ramm is such a fine gentleman. But Christ is sinless.

Stress in the Family

by Tim Timmons

Harvest House Publishers, 1982, 184 pp., \$4.95

Where Have All the Mothers Gone?

by Brenda Hunter

Zondervan Publishing House, 1982, 177 pp., \$8.95

Reviewed by Ronald E. Hawkins, Professor of Pastoral Counseling, Liberty Baptist College, Lynchburg, Virginia.

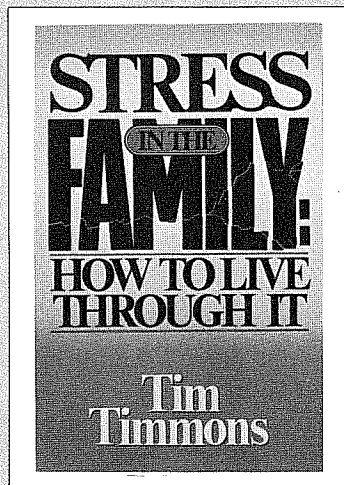
Stress in the Family, by Tim Timmons, is a timely book. The American family has never suffered from so many demands and stresses. Timmons promises to help us live through the "stress mess." He warns that there is a limit to the amount of stress a per-

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son can take. This is a helpful corrective for the "burn out for the Lord" message that is popular in some circles. The emphasis on the stewardship of the whole person is desperately needed in this day when *burnout* has become a household word.



The material Timmons amasses to accomplish his mission is primarily a rehash of material that is available in other published sources. The uniqueness of the Timmons book lies in his ability to mix metaphors and arrange material in a creative and readable fashion. Terms like *stress-mess*, *vowers* and *woers*, *relational entropy*, and a host of others make the book fun to read and provide easily remembered hooks upon which to hang biblical principles.

Timmons's emphasis on entropy and Murphyism casts him in the mold of the ancient Solomonic man of wisdom. Man is falling apart at the seams, life is full of piles (knotty problems), and every aspect of our world is polluted. Timmons is the herald of a message that needs to be heard above the din of the prosperity teaching that dominates the scene in many quarters.

A major portion of the book deals with "relational entropy." The battle of the sexes, abusers and users, and the pressures of parenting all make great demands on people. Timmons counsels that retreating is not an appropriate

response to these problems. The answer to the stress of human existence is in the possession of the love that frees. Loving turns victims into victors and is the only responsible way to plug into life and deal responsibly with relationships. This dynamic love is available to those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The practical suggestions for avoiding the stress mess and implementing a "responding love" are very helpful.

A clarion call for motherhood is sounded by Brenda Hunter in her new book *Where Have All the Mothers Gone?* Throughout the book Mrs. Hunter urges mothers to stand against the views of mothering that pervade our present culture. In keeping with contemporary developmental approaches to personality formations, she insists on the primary importance of the mother. She indicates through personal experience and observation that when mothers are unwilling or unable to parent effectively their children suffer and are scarred for life.



Mrs. Hunter is sensitive to the struggles of contemporary mothers as they attempt to define their personal worth and at the same time parent their children. She maintains that the press for fulfillment and identity has resulted in a progressive devaluation of mothering and that our culture is issuing no

plaudits to women who opt for motherhood at the expense of a full-time career.

How have we reached such a tragic point? In answering the question she poignantly explodes some common myth-stakes. On the myth of the warm surrogate mother she states, "My children's emotional well-being outweighs any accomplishment...that is why I am now, at forty-one, unwilling to pursue a full-time career outside the home." Her own journey into loneliness as a child may color her thinking a bit here but her arguments are basically rational and sound.

The myth of the fulfilled working mother is unveiled. No child she interviewed admitted enjoying coming home to an empty house or remaining home alone when sick. The mother may be doing well and financially the family may prosper, but Hunter insists that the evidence reveals that the child who grows up alone ultimately punishes society for his suffering.

The myth of the empty housewife is next explored and exploded. Women who have bought the Betty Friedan model may resent mothering and find the task depressing. However, women who view mothering as an investment in the future are not depressed or anxious over their position in life.

The ultimate issue for Brenda Hunter is that a woman must find something big enough to live for. A woman cannot ultimately live for herself, for her husband and children, or for a job. Jesus Christ alone can tell us who we are. Mrs. Hunter insists that with the insight He provides I can handle the guilt of my failures, solve my need for nurture as I undertake the tasks of marriage and parenting, and keep before me the vision of mothering with all of its challenge and complexity.

Ultimately she reminds us that life is a question of commitment. This book is an exciting challenge to pick up the task of mothering and get committed to the world's most important task.

BOOKMARKS

One of the important services that publishing houses provide for Christians is the keeping alive of great classics from the past. It is simply irresponsible and wasteful to limit publications for believers to contemporary contributions.

One publisher that deserves special mention in this regard is Kregel Publications of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Over the last few years Kregel has been in the process of reprinting a wealth of Bible study aids and commentaries of the nineteenth century. We can only mention a few examples here that have recently arrived.

Several of the homiletical commentaries of David Thomas, a great English pastor and prolific writer of the last century, are available. His commentaries on *Job*, *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Matthew*, *John*, and *Acts* are written by a pastor for pastors. These are of tremendous value.

Ada Habershon was a friend of Moody and Spurgeon and remains one of the great women biblical scholars. Her *Hidden Pictures in the Old Testament* contains a wealth of sermon material.

Kregel has also reprinted, in a special series, much of the writings of William Graham Scroggie, the great conference speaker and pastor of Spurgeon's Tabernacle in London. His *Studies in Philemon* is an excellent little volume.

David Bacon, a converted Russian Jew, is represented by his fine study, *Israel in the Plan of God*.

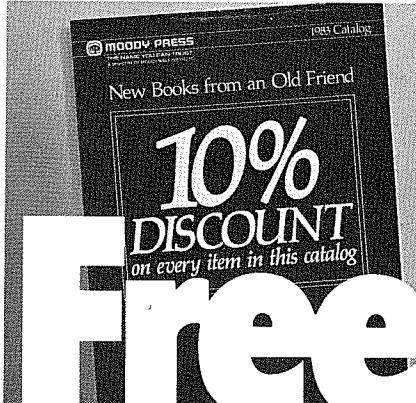
Another helpful series reprints classic commentaries under the title *Practical Truths*. Most noteworthy is Alfred Edersheim's *Elisha*, the *Prophet* which appears as *Practical Truths from Elisha*; and also Joseph Exell's *Practical Truths from Jonah*. These and many others in their catalog provide invaluable aid in gaining a true understanding without sacrificing immediately useful material.

Kregel is to be commended for its contribution. Every Bible student, especially pastors, should take advantage.

Bible Study
continued from page 49

our specific ministry for Him. This blessed fact is brought out again and again in the New Testament. Note:

1. As demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus. Often during His earthly walk our Lord reminded His followers that His hour was not yet come (see John 2:4; 7:6,30; 8:20). By this He meant there were still things He must do before Calvary. But during the final days He announced that His time or hour *had* come (see John 12:23; 13:1; 17:1; Mark 14:35).
2. As demonstrated in the life of Paul. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand (2 Tim. 4:6).
3. As promised to all believers. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16). Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time (Col. 4:5). And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear (1 Peter 1:17). ☐



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