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Review: Inscriptions and Reflections: Essays in Philosophical Theology

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educated include the willingness to be philosophically open, universalistic, nonauthoritarian, and prejudiced against faith. The sooner Christians come to grips with these difficult characteristics the sooner they will be able to minister effectively to the needs of the educated.

In terms of Deffner's understanding of the educated he seems to refer to them as those who are somehow "other" from the community of believers. One gets the impression that the educated are easily identified as those who are (1) nonbelievers, probably skeptics or agnostics of some sort, (2) consumers of modern literature containing such themes as despair, nihilism, cynicism, and the like, and (3) individuals who are most likely consumed with self. Because Deffner seems to paint the educated in such a negative light it raises the question of whether he approves of the Christian taking part in educational activities. It is obvious that he approves of Christians studying the educated's literature, but strictly for the purpose of evangelism.

Deffner seems to assume that an unsaved educated person is not truly educated because to be truly educated one must receive Christ as Savior. If so, someone needs to explain why the truly educated have so often failed to produce quality academic work. Deffner also makes blanket statements about the educated. "Pseudo-intellectuals get their news from *Time* magazine and ABC's 20/20. They follow intellectual trends and so are assured of consuming the 'right' ones" (p. 159). Deffner would do well to remember that many Christians get their news from *Moody Monthly* and the 700 Club in order to be assured of their own "rightness."

I do not wish to dismiss everything that Deffner has to say. I think he truly desires to minister to the educated community. But works like this continue to foster the typical adversary attitude that pits the pathetic, lost nonbeliever against the all-knowing, truly-educated polemicist. To say of educated nonbelievers that their questions are mere refusals to accept Christian revelation is to call into question our claim to be truly educated.

David L. Russell
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Inscriptions and Reflections: Essays in Philosophical Theology. By Robert P. Scharlemann. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989, 254 pp., $35.00.

Scharlemann is a writer usually associated with aspects of radical philosophical theology. There is some warrant for this perceived association, and Scharlemann's aim and method are radical but not in a wholly negative sense. While my response to Scharlemann must be yes and no (as will become clearer below), still there is no question that a number of his essays here reflect deep theological concern. While they are diverse in topic they are all, in various ways, tied together by Scharlemann's program of theological thinking, which is a radical rethinking or afterthinking (*metanoesis*) of ontology. Because the theological task, according to Scharlemann, is "to inscribe the name 'God' upon every name, the tale 'God is' upon every event, and the judgment 'God is God' upon any identity," the book contains various approaches and attempts at such inscription plus "reflections on whether and how it can be done." In his task Scharlemann is clearly indebted to the thought of M. Heidegger, P. Ricoeur, G. W. F. Hegel and the French deconstructionists (Derrida) as well as his most prominent theological mentor, P. Tillich. Less conspicuous, though highly influential at critical methodological points, is the thought of the

early Barth (up to and including his work on Anselm) as Barth sought to break with his mentors and radically to think through the theological task.

The book is also complex as well as philosophically and theologically demanding, one that the novice (or even intermediate) reader must basically steer clear of. It often requires that the reader follow intricate lines of thought and expression. To be sure, readers capable of following the arguments will find themselves in disagreement with Scharlemann at many points. For those who are capable, however, the book is not to be passed over. Despite its complexity it is highly stimulating. Indeed, as one follows Scharlemann through the first section of eight essays on ontology and theology one finds that this theological thinking as afterthinking, this inversion of the ontological, is a radically Christological concern.

For the initiated the book can be often an exciting, controversial, even adversarial study that regularly requires a redirecting or breaking with old habits of thinking. While that is never simple or comfortable it does stretch or heal us of what Heidegger would call forgetfulness, helping us to ask the unasked question. Contrary to the opinion of many, Scharlemann is no detached philosopher of religion or a merely radical thinker on religious topics whose perspectives have no bearing on the life of faith or relation to God in Christ. My interaction with Scharlemann's thought leads me to conclude that, for the most part, while his thought is radical it is radically confessional at the same time. In his essays Scharlemann is seeking to engage strenuously with issues of the faith in relation to and by means of current philosophical, hermeneutical and linguistic questions and conceptualizations in a way that no one else is.

Still, for me at least there are parts, directions and conclusions in the book with which I am in disagreement. I found in the latter essays a perspective on God that draws its impetus from the line of thinking that goes through Tillich back to Plotinus. God becomes Plotinus' One, an amorphous other, a blank transcendence about which nothing can be affirmed but by which the multitudinous responses to the divine/depth is wholly affirmed. What says this of truth? Are all partial? Are all on the way? Further, some of the argumentation, which seems to be dependent not only on Tillich's unique reckoning of the surety of the Biblical picture of Jesus for faith but also methodologically on Barth's analysis of Anselm, is unconvincing. It reminds one of Hartshorne's assessment of the so-called ontological argument. It leaves the believer invulnerable. It all seems detached from reality somehow, whatever its formal validity. Near the end of the book Jesus becomes the "depth of actual freedom." As pregnant or potentially insightful as that reflection may be in relation to redemption in some sense, it is not enough in light of the actual incarnate movement of God in human history and for humanity. To my affirmations above I must also finally wear the coat of Pascal.

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Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical. Volume 1. By James Leo Garrett, Jr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 658 pp., $35.00.

In the first of two volumes Garrett covers five areas: revelation, theology proper, creation, anthropology and Christology. Topics are helpfully divided into digestible chapters of about fifteen pages each with the outline given in the text for easy reference, though some points have only a single sentence of explanation. Authors

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