


Spring 2005

Review: The Advancement: Keeping Faith in an Evolutionary Age

William E. Brown

Liberty University, webrown@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs

 Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), [Comparative Methodologies and Theories Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), [History of Religions of Eastern Origins Commons](#), [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#), [Other Religion Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brown, William E., "Review: The Advancement: Keeping Faith in an Evolutionary Age" (2005). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 242.

http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/242

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and Graduate School at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu.

The Advancement: Keeping Faith in an Evolutionary Age, by L. Russ Bush. Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003. Pp. 109.

L. Russ Bush serves as Senior Professor of Philosophy and Dean of Faculty for Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. One might wonder why this reviewer would be so foolish as to review his Dean's latest work. The answer lies in the author's previous work and the reviewer's shortcomings. Bush coauthored *Baptists and the Bible* identifying the error and dangers of the view that biblical inerrancy developed late in Christianity and in particular among Baptists. Several leading figures in the conservative resurgence identify *Baptists and the Bible* as pivotal in helping pastors and laity understand the issues and thereby contributing to the resurgence.

One might hope *The Advancement* will do the same for one of the critical contemporary issues of Christianity: the widespread acceptance of non-biblical philosophies. This reviewer thinks and works in a pragmatic arena and struggles with abstract philosophical thought. Therefore, the hope also arises that *The Advancement* might assist similarly challenged non-philosophes in mastering the principle issues. Could *The Advancement* serve as a primer on modern cultural paradigms?

Bush coins "Advancement" as the appropriate term to describe the modern worldview based on naturalistic philosophy. He explains: "The twenty-first century era begs for a descriptive name. Modern seems strangely old-fashioned, and Postmodern is surely a temporary name. Perhaps the era through which we are passing could be dubbed the 'Advancement.' Modernism's tenants have not been thoroughly replaced in the poplar culture, nor have even the intellectual elite fully abandoned them. Modernity still rules in many ways, but change is apparent. A sense of chaos seems to be creeping in, a sense of indeterminacy. Traditions are set aside; cultural roots are forgotten and ignored. In more ways than one, this is a new age, but the 'new' is really 'old.' Nevertheless, the obvious technological progress must be recognized." The beauty of *The Advancement* rests in Bush's identification of the philosophical concepts which have influenced human thought for centuries under various labels.

Bush organizes his treatise into eight chapters. Chapter 1, "The Worldview of the Advancement," traces the development of modern thought. The reader encounters Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies, Kant and Schleiermacher, as well as the concept of secularization. Bush ends the chapter explaining and contrasting the modern, Christian, and the new worldviews.

In chapter 2, he outlines the rise of advancement science with its dependence upon uniformitarian thought and evolution. These advancement lynchpins have stripped mankind of its unique status in the universe. Instead of being a creation in the Creator's image, man now creates his own gods (34).

In chapter 3, Bush details the effects on science when God no longer exists. Without a Creator, truth becomes relative. Bush states, "There is, moreover, in a

theistic worldview, a basis and a source for truth outside of and other than from human observation alone. . . . The real existence of this source, God himself, is the only viable guarantee of the objectivity of truth" (38). This chapter exemplifies the merit of Bush's work. He walks the reader through the post-mortem of objective truth and why the the new worldview is unsound. He clarifies the inherent failing of biological evolution and its ramifications for the acquisition of knowledge, then moves on to the resulting dilemma, the secular attempts to buttress the failings, and finally the resultant loss of truth.

Bush explains: "The modern worldview allows no objectivity because it defines the mind simply as an effect of the process" (49). As an animal operating under physical limitations of the chemical and physical processes, man is incapable of determining truth (48). Of course Christians and theists who have accepted the validity of the naturalistic propositions are forced to adapt theologically.

Chapter 4, "Modern Theistic Alternatives," presents the leading theological adaptations of Process Theology and Open Theism. Over the years this reviewer has encountered many Christians who feel comfortable blending their faith with the naturalistic worldview. They like the idea of maintaining their faith while letting go of the old-fashioned idea of a six-day creation.

Chapter 5 reveals the fallacy of this action. The position, as is the case with all hybrids, is sterile. Bush's "Ten Axioms of Modern Scientific Thought" enumerates the foundational beliefs in a manner that reveals their failings. Bush ends the chapter with "Five Simple Objections to Naturalistic Evolution." Having presented the various facets of advancement thought, Bush ends his work with the final chapters detailing why the advancement worldview must be rejected and why the biblical worldview alone has merit.

This review opened questioning whether *The Advancement* "might assist similarly challenged nonphilosophes in mastering the principle issues" and "serve as a primer on modern cultural paradigms?" The answer to both is a solid "Yes." *The Advancement* dismantles naturalistic philosophy on a level that a non-academician can easily understand. This reviewer continually appreciated Bush's writing manner that simplified complicated philosophies and stripped the clutter from a wide range of contemporary issues.

The one question this reviewer kept asking was "if, after dismantling popular philosophies, would the author present the gospel?" Bush's final chapter did an excellent job of presenting Christ in a manner consistent with the intended readership.

Concise, insightful, and readable, *The Advancement* is an indispensable addition to one's library. The reviewer has recommended it to several people who have dialogues with science-related professionals. Christian apologists will also benefit from *The Advancement*.

Just recently, the Supreme Court of Georgia ruled that the state school system could not apply a sticker inside text books stating evolution was a theory and not fact; therefore, students should carefully study the issue for themselves.

The court ruled that the statement was religious and therefore unconstitutional. Unfortunately, one can not require the justices to read *The Advancement*, but one can definitely appreciate its timeliness in such a context.

WILLIAM E. BROWN



Business for the Glory of God, by Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003. Pp. 96.

Due to the recent corporate scandals in America, there is a tendency to think negatively about business. Grudem rejects this negative view of business as misguided and argues that many aspects of business are not morally neutral but are in fact morally good *in themselves* and that *in themselves* they bring glory to God. Many aspects of business have the potential for abuse, but should this be allowed to obscure a Christian's perspective on business?

Grudem does not think so and considers the business concepts of ownership, productivity, employment, profit, borrowing and lending, competition and world poverty, as providing opportunities to glorify God.

The explanation of each of the above concepts makes up the basic outline of the book. For instance, concerning the concept of ownership, Grudem believes that "God has created us with a *desire to own things* because he wanted us to have a *desire to imitate his sovereignty* in this way" (20). In addition, the owner can glorify God with possessions in numerous ways including giving some of them away. Ownership is not evil, and if sin had not entered the world, ownership would still exist. It has, however, been distorted by sins of greed and selfishness.

Concerning the concept of employment, opportunities abound as well to glorify God. Exhibiting honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness glorifies God and gives opportunity to "demonstrate proper exercise of authority and proper responses to authority, in imitation of the authority that has eternally existed between the Father and Son in the Trinity" (32).

Grudem, to his credit, consistently connects business concepts to imitating the attributes of God or to the relationships within the Trinity. Grounding business principles in theology is a needed and novel approach in discussing business.

The final chapter offers a solution to world poverty. He writes, "I believe *the only long-term solution to world poverty is business* (80)." Providing food and clothing is good, but only a short-term solution. While Grudem acknowledges that there are obstacles to overcome such as the abuse of power and evil, repressive governments, he also suggests that another reason business is not viewed as a solution is that people have negative attitudes toward business and have been conditioned to think that business is evil in itself.

Whether or not this is actually the case may be debated, but this approach raises a question that Grudem does not address: "Can there be a business solution without including the [g]ospel?" Part of the reason that a business solution to

poverty does not succeed is due to sinful governments and individuals who are greedy, prideful, and selfish.

The book is unfortunately too brief. Many chapters are only three to four pages, and thus some comments do not get enough treatment. For example, through lending and borrowing, Grudem believes that one can reflect many of God's attributes by demonstrating some knowledge of the distant future. Concerning competition, Grudem states that it is a "sort of societal functioning of God's attributes of wisdom and kindness, and it is a way society helps people discover God's will for their lives" (65). A further explanation of these statements would have been helpful. Undoubtedly, Grudem will expand upon these ideas in his future work on the Bible and economics.

Notwithstanding this slight criticism, this is an excellent, thought-provoking book that serves to encourage Christian business owners and employees to serve and glorify God in the workplace. It is also a needed reminder that a great way to glorify God is by going into business.

RUSSELL WOODBRIDGE



Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality, by Donald Miller. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2003. Pp. 244.

Donald Miller's *Blue Like Jazz* is an insightful, introspective look at the Christian faith. Miller's wit, sincerity, and candor make this book the most humorous and refreshing piece of literature I have held in my hands this year. I giggled all the way through it and came away from it more deeply moved than I have been in a long while. My copy has been ruthlessly underlined and earmarked, and I have carried it around town reading its delightful paragraphs to my wife, friends, and complete strangers.

The author of *Blue Like Jazz* attempts to relate authentic Christianity to unbelievers by removing the religious and cultural baggage from traditional American Christianity. The desired result is that 1) unbelievers will be able to hear the pure, clear gospel, and not a polluted rendition of it; and 2) believers will look at their own faith in a more authentic way. Christianity is not a formula, Miller says. It is like jazz music in that it does not resolve neatly; rather, you have to experience it in order really to "get it."

While I did find the book delightful and refreshing, there were some things Miller said that made me hesitate. Miller seems to believe there is no evidential or logical foundation to his belief system (a.k.a. "*fideism*"). An unbelieving friend (52) tells Miller that she does not understand why he believes in God or why he insists she must also. He responds by saying, "I don't know why, either, . . . but I believe in God, Laura. There is something inside me that causes me to believe" (53). He then compares it to belief in Peter Pan or the Tooth Fairy (55), the feeling of love, or the experience of beauty (54). No evidential or logical reasoning is presented; it is