



MISSION

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CATALYST

Intelligent comment on faith and culture



JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN

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THE GOSPEL FOR EVERY SPHERE



MISSION IS NOT MERELY GEOGRAPHICAL. IT IS INCREASINGLY INTELLECTUAL

Returning from Bangladesh in the late 1980s, I was familiar with life in the raw. Animals were slaughtered at the side of the road, the blood flowing into the ditch before the meat was cut and brought into the market to attract flies and buyers in unequal numbers.

A neighbour whose husband had died months before we arrived asked if we wanted to see some photographs. Out came the album with pictures of his body soon after death, being laid out, washed, dressed in his best suit and carefully laid in a rough wooden box.

When I returned to the UK and ministry in a local church I needed a theology that was as earthy and raw as this and discovering a short book of "Further Everyday Prayers" was formative for me. One of the editors was Michael Walker, a lecturer in Christian Doctrine at South Wales Baptist College

and I quickly appreciated the all-encompassing breadth of his theology.

I believed then, and now, that faith had to deal with the real world, with the things spoken about in the pub, at the workplace, on the football terrace, in the university and in the press. Walker's prayers captured this.

He prayed appreciatively for parts of life often neglected by the church: "We thank you for fictional authors from whose imaginations there leap characters, plots and stories which cast a spell and lure us into their intriguing, tragic, unpredictable, urbane and funny worlds."

His prayers were political, asking for forgiveness "when policies are put before people, dogma before debate".

Praying for the media in language familiar to the media, he spoke of how "in Christ, you confirmed the power of the word, and the sharpness of the image, for, in him, the word became flesh and in him, we beheld the divine image".

He was raw too, speaking of "...the winos, a fragile fellowship passing a bottle from mouth to mouth".

These prayers embody the conviction that every part of life is of concern to God.

And here's the thing. Each of these areas embodies a collection of

convictions, presuppositions, dogma, prejudices, principles, philosophy and beliefs.

Politics, science, education, economics, medicine, sport, the arts and media all shape our lives, and *nothing* is beyond the orbit of 'God in Christ by his Holy Spirit'.

And these in turn are shaped by minds that determine whether its OK to alter DNA to avoid an inheritable disease, determine whether market forces alone are enough to decide levels of pay in Asian garment factories, or whether page 3 of *The Sun* is morally neutral in a post-Christian society.

We have come to think of mission as geographically determined... Asia, Africa, inner city, ends of the earth. Big mistake!

Maybe we've overlooked the mission field closest to home – the mission of the mind.

This edition of *Catalyst*, and our **Catalyst Live** conferences in November, seek to equip us for this mission.

David Kerrigan
General Director



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FEATURING:

JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN
JOHN LENNOX | DAVID COFFEY

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Director, the Faraday Institute for
Science and Religion and
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International brain-science
researcher and tutor at Oxford Centre
for Christian Apologetics

By Gary Streeter MP

Chair of Christians in Parliament, Chair of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (which promotes democratic government in emerging nations across the world) and Conservative MP for Devon South West

CHRISTIANS IN POLITICS: A TIME TO ENGAGE

CHRISTIANS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF POLITICS ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE, NOT JUST IN POLICY BUT THROUGH THEIR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

Parliament has changed over my 20 years here. Three prime ministers have come and gone, political parties have been out of power, in power, and out of power again, and policies, previously successful, have made way for more pertinent and innovative ideas.

But, something else has changed too. Christian MPs, a once small and niche group, have grown in number and credibility. Sprinkled across the political parties, they now consider it normal to see their political activities as an extension of their faith. As a Christian MP myself, I no longer ask why should we be involved in politics, but why wouldn't we be?

Politics is about everyday life. It is about making decisions on big issues, from those which affect the nation as a whole, such as how we defend ourselves, to those which affect people at a local level, like the powers they have to challenge decisions or the way they are protected by the welfare system. It is about bringing problems to light, whether they be human rights abuses, faith issues or consumer protection concerns. These are all topics which Christians care about and which many Christians have strong opinions on.

They are also issues on which we have

something distinctive to say. I can't think of many Christians who don't see the Bible as providing a framework for understanding society; as offering an explanation of how it works, where Christians fit into it, and their purpose for being there. For most, it is a guidebook, a fountain of advice on the best way to live and the principles which should underpin healthy, well-functioning communities. These are principles which should inform political opinion and debate, especially if society is to work at its best. Without Christian voices promoting them, they will play no part in shaping national policies.

If Christians are not in politics, they will play no part in setting the agenda either. It is only from within Parliament that we can call for debates on issues like the sex industry, or child poverty, or raise the impact of legislation on living standards and health inequalities. It is only from within Parliament that we can be a voice for constituents who feel like no-one is on their side. In short, being in Westminster enables us to bring the love of God into the work, debates and events which take place there.

Our behaviour and attitude can have a huge influence on those around us as well. Many Christian colleagues are known



the kind of behaviour which makes people stop and think 'there's something different about these guys'.

And what is the point of it all? What is the end game? Our intention is certainly not to set up a theocracy. It wouldn't be fair to have Christian views privileged

“ IF CHRISTIANS ARE NOT IN POLITICS, THEY WILL PLAY NO PART IN SETTING THE AGENDA ”

around Parliament as the people who act with integrity, who don't always hammer home the party political message, but are able to be positive and mature. They bring a focus on fairness and often come to difficult issues with thoughtfulness and prayer. To all of this they add the miracle ingredient of humility, of being willing to serve others and act in ways which are not always expedient politically. This is

above those of other faith or non-faith groups, or to have those views imposed on people who don't buy into Christian ideas. But the Christian voice *should* be one amongst the chorus of voices. It should contribute to political debate because it has a different perspective to offer, and because the closer we come to a society modelled on biblical values, the better it will be for everyone.

One of the world's greatest living theologians, Jürgen Moltmann is Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen and author of some of the most significant theological works in the Protestant tradition

Q&A



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PROF JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN

CHRISTIAN ECONOMICS, BLASPHEMIES ABOUT CREATION AND WHAT THE RISE OF THE NAZIS TAUGHT HIM ABOUT POLITICS – JÜRGEN MOLTSMANN TALKS EXCLUSIVELY TO MISSION CATALYST

In an age where there is quite a lot of intellectual resistance to religion, particularly in the West, what is the best thing that Christians can do in witnessing to people who have intellectual doubts?

Faith means to live with God, and in God, and in the fullness of life, and the New Atheism is offering only a reduced life. You can, of course, live without God, much as you can live without music. But what's the sense of it? It's a poor life and a reduced life. The New Atheism is only alive as long as there is faith in God.

If theism is vanishing, atheism is also vanishing, so it's not a real option. The rest is materialism.

I've spoken to many Christians who work in the scientific or philosophical fields, who speak of an anti-intellectual stream within the Church. Would you recognise that?

I'm sorry to admit that there are trends of fundamentalism in Christianity, especially in certain parts of the United States, and in the Muslim world and also

in Judaism. But it is not living faith, to be anti-intellectual. The intellect is given by God and must be used to understand what you believe and why you are in the world – so we must overcome this type of fundamentalism in the different religions.

Fundamentalism is dualistic: 'here are the faithful, there are the unbelievers, and the unbelievers must be suppressed or killed'. This is a strange anticipation of the idea of Armageddon, the end, where the final battle of God and the devils will take place. This is not Christian, this is

apocalypticism in a modern form, and in politics it is friend-foe thinking: 'who is not for us is against us'.

“ **THE SEPARATION
OF POLITICS
AND FAITH WAS
AN OBSTACLE
TO RESISTANCE
AGAINST HITLER** ”

There are still Christians who say that the Church should only be involved in evangelism and others who say we should mostly be involved in acts of mercy and good works. What is the value of purely intellectual work in this context?

There has been an interaction between theology and the sciences, theology and law, theology and medicine for 700 years, since universities were founded. Most were founded by churches or monasteries. There is a long tradition of interaction between theology and other academic work, and we should not give this up. In theology and natural sciences, there is an insight into the contingency of the world, which is a creation of God but not divine in itself. There is an insight into the open future of the universe. Between theology and law there are the Ten Commandments, and the Sermon on the Mount, forming Christian laws. And between theology and medicine there are the many ethical commissions today. So we cannot disengage from academic and intellectual work.

Does Christianity have anything to say to the discipline of economics, either in terms of choosing between various systems or having particular principles to inform it?

I am a great defender of the social state. Social legislation came into being during the time of Bismarck in Germany and it is full of Christian ideas. The social state means security for everyone. Another Christian principle is fairness in competition. Competition must not be a life and death question, but you must know where competition begins, where competition is limited and ends.

A third idea is the investment in the future. Not living at the cost of the next generation but investing in the

future – this presupposes a strong and long-term hope. And this should be a Christian principle in economics. After all, Christians since the first community at Pentecost have known that there is enough for everyone, and this can be translated into global economics.

Christians in politics, particularly in the United States, have a mixed reputation. Should Christianity be separated from politics?

No, not at all! One thing we learnt from the Nazi state in Germany is that we must be involved as soon as possible if a dictatorship arises. The separation of politics and faith was an obstacle for many Christians becoming involved in resistance against Hitler. Since that time, I would rather be involved in politics, even if I'm wrong. Not being involved is much worse.

When we get to questions of the environment and creation care, there is a stream of thinking that says that the world is going to be destroyed by fire anyway so there's no point in protecting it now. What would you say to that view?

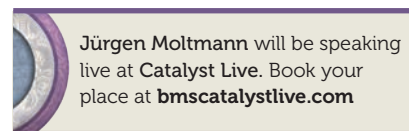
This is blasphemy against the Creator, the Saviour and the Holy Spirit poured out on all flesh. I reject this idea that the world is going to hell, anyway. This is cynicism and has nothing to do with faith in God the Creator, the Saviour and the Holy Spirit. And if some Christians read the

“ **I'M NOT A CHURCH FATHER,
I'M ONLY A CHILD OF GOD** ”

apocalyptic verses in the New Testament, they should read to the end; because the Christian hope always says that in the end is the beginning and, therefore, we don't give this world up to hell.

What would you define as great Christian art?

Church music like Handel and Bach attracts not only believers but also unbelievers. This is a great tradition of Christian art. I'm not an expert on modern films, but I think Christianity is a religion of memory and of hope. We have a book and have developed hermeneutics to understand what was written 2,000 years before, and this hermeneutics – the art of understanding – influenced modern philosophy very much. So, to have a story to memorise and a hope to imagine is a contribution of Christianity to the world



of fine art.

How has your theology changed over the years?

I'm changing of course, I'm a living person and not a stone. I started with the concept of history under the aspect of hope, then came to the ecological questions and developed an understanding of reality as creation and so on. I am not an authority. I feel more like a brother, a friend in a large community where I learn and speak and give what I can and take what I can. I am only one in a long chain of theologians.

Do you feel a weight of responsibility that comes with your great influence?

I must confess I don't feel a responsibility because I am not an authority. We all learn from each other and give to each other what we can. I'm not a church Father! I'm only a child of God in the Community of Christ.

And yet so many see you as a church father, you are elevated in the minds of so many. Is that uncomfortable?

If they can use what I am saying and if they feel encouraged and empowered, I'm

happy. But I'm not responsible for their faith. Each one is responsible for what he is thinking and believing and doing. It's not authority, a teacher and his students, it's more the beloved community in which I feel at home. African storytellers finish their story very often with the phrase, "what was good in the story belongs to you, what was poor in the story remains my property." And this is my last word also.

What can people pray for, for you?

That God may forgive my sins, have mercy with my errors and inspire me with the Holy Spirit.

Jürgen Moltmann's latest book, The Ethics of Hope, is available from SCM Press (scmpress.co.uk)

Interview by Jonathan Langley

By Dr Nicholas Wood

Dean of Regent's Park College, Oxford and Director of the Oxford Centre for Christianity and Culture



THE FALSE
DICHOTOMY OF
RETREAT FROM
CULTURE OR
ASSIMILATION BY IT
MUST BE REJECTED
BY CHRISTIANS

My work in the Centre for Christianity and Culture concerns the exploration of the relationship between Christian faith and the various cultures of which it is a part. Cultures which in many instances it has helped to shape. My predecessor, the Mennonite scholar Alan Kreider, once told me that he overheard a conversation between two people passing the Centre's sign, which went something like this:

"Christianity and culture? That's

interesting." "Yes," came the reply, "what a pity you can't have both!"

That exchange reflects a common attitude from some people within the church as well as casual observers outside it. The argument goes something like this: in the end a choice must be made, Christians must either assimilate to our surrounding culture, and so lose our Christian identity; or we must retreat from wider society into a holy huddle, a godly ghetto, where we can retain our identity

and preserve our purity in the face of an apparently hostile world. Whatever some radical secularists might hope, and whatever some Christian pietists might prefer, for me neither of these is a serious option. What we need is rather what I would call 'critical engagement'.

Most crucial, most neglected, most costly

At the heart of the Christian faith is our affirmation of the self-revelation of God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the distinctive calling of the Church to be the community which carries within its life the witness to these crucial events. Each of the four Gospels, and the book of Acts, record Christ's commission to his followers that they will bear witness to all this, as Bishop Lesslie Newbigin memorably put it, "to the ends of the

marks of the crucifixion. These scars are the consequence of God's 'critical engagement' with the world which God had called into being, and which God continues to sustain in love and grace: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14). What the events which follow in the gospel story reveal is the 'critical engagement' of God in Christ with human cultures. Traditionally, theologians have called this 'the Incarnation', literally the 'enfleshment' of the divine.

Retreating from culture: hiding from God

In John's language the word 'flesh' is shorthand for all that it means to be human. Christ shares our flesh and blood of course, but to be human is more than to

particular time. Geography and history play a significant part in shaping our experience of life and our responses to it.

Within all this we learn a language which expresses and shapes, and sometimes limits, our understanding of the world we inhabit, and by which we construct our identity. By language I mean not just spoken or written words, but art, music, dance and drama, scientific theories and social and political systems, in which we express and communicate our understandings, our values, our hopes and aspirations. In other words, we all of us inhabit a culture, and what is more, our culture inhabits us, as missionary thinkers like Newbigin (*The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*) have helpfully shown.

So, to retreat from culture is to turn our back on all that makes us human. It is to hide from ourselves and from God, and is ultimately impossible, for we remain creatures of our time and place, conditioned by our history and heritage, expressing our hopes and fears in what the modern poet Thom Gunn calls the 'dull thunder of approximate words'.

All kingdoms are God's

But the Christian story provides us with a mirror in which we can learn to see ourselves as God sees us, and to help us to critique our own and other cultures. As we indwell the Christian story, so it in turn begins to indwell us, shaping us and helping us to reshape the world around until "the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our God and of his Christ".

The British theologian Tim Gorringer put it economically when he said simply: "God engages!" If that is true, as the doctrine of the Incarnation suggests it is, what choice do we have but to do the same?

“ WHATEVER SOME RADICAL SECULARISTS MIGHT HOPE, AND WHATEVER SOME CHRISTIAN PIETISTS MIGHT PREFER, WHAT WE NEED IS CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT ”

earth and to the end of time". Or, as John's Gospel expresses this command of the risen Lord, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (John 20: 21) In his telling little book on *Christian Mission in the Modern World*, John Stott characterises this as "the most crucial", but also "the most neglected" form of the Great Commission, because, says Stott, it is "the most costly".

For this is the command of the Lord who bears, even in his risen body, the

possess a physical body, though we should never underestimate the importance which our physical existence plays in our humanity. Our humanity is shaped by our ethnic heritage, by our gender, our sexuality. But to be human also means to be part of a community. We are born into families, which themselves have taken widely different patterns throughout human history. To be human means to be located in a particular place and a

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CHRISTIANS IN JOURNALISM

THE EDITOR OF CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE ASKS WHAT CHRISTIANS OFFER THE PRESS

Journalists have a terrible reputation. Every now and again you see these surveys where journalists come joint bottom with Estate Agents in terms of the level of respect the public affords them. To a degree, I sympathise with their view.

We are talking about a profession which exists largely to hound people at their most vulnerable – terminal illness, job loss, financial ruin and marital breakdown are no barrier to intrusion from the press.

Yes, you can blame the consumer for being interested in these kinds of stories (if they didn't sell newspapers, we wouldn't print them) but at the end of the day, journalists are still the ones who chase the recently-bereaved down the street, go through their bins and camp in their garden in the hope of a fresh angle.

This isn't the full picture. If it were all finding new and horrifying ways to feed the public's addiction to other people's misery, then there would be a very good case for doing away with the profession entirely.

But, of course, it has a nobler ideal. The function of the media is to hold society, and its governors in particular, to account. Our job is to find out the truth and communicate

it, and often the truth is something that someone, somewhere doesn't want you to know. Without an independent media, it is very difficult to claim any kind of free society.

So that's the profession at its worst and its best. What does Christianity bring to the table? It would be very easy to set this up as Christians being the ones who behave ethically, crusaders for justice and truth in a dark and murky world. The reality is much more subtle than that. Christians do not have the monopoly on ethical practice,

you're looking, God is present. There is hope to be uncovered, you just have to find it.

Christians also offer the fact that we're here to serve something outside of ourselves. Journalism is a competitive profession with very immediate rewards. We all get a buzz from getting the story. Seeing your byline can become very addictive. You can trample over colleagues and rivals to gain the glory for yourself. Comments from readers can lead you to believe that because you have influence, you matter more than those who have less of a public voice.

“CHRISTIANS DO NOT HAVE THE
MONOPOLY ON ETHICAL PRACTICE,
COMPASSION, HARD WORK OR INTEGRITY”

compassion, hard work or integrity. Nor do I think that Christian journalists do (or should) only write positive stories. Our job is to report the truth, as accurately as possible, not to manipulate the facts to fit our agenda, however well-meaning that agenda might be.

What we can do, and what ought to be easier as a Christian, is to look for the light.

This isn't the same as putting a positive spin on a story. It's trying to uncover the hope which is already present. We are a hopeful people. I believe there is redemption in the darkest situations. You only have to look at the countless stories of Christians forgiving the people who've murdered their children or their loved ones for proof of that. Whoever you're interviewing or wherever

Here's where being a Christian is really helpful. We are already taught not to let these things define us. We've died to self. We're not doing it to 'win', to get the byline, build our profile, or gain influence. We're doing it to serve.

I still passionately believe in journalism. Despite having a terrible reputation, and even though 'traditional' media outlets risk being drowned out by the 'everyone's an expert' culture which blogging, social media and the like has brought about, it's still important. And the more people in the profession who are operating selflessly, to serve a higher aim, the greater the chance the profession has of redeeming itself in years to come.

By Emily Rodgers

LAabri Fellowship, England, with degrees in literature, art, and educational administration



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Diego Velázquez's *Peasants at a Table*

ART AS HOSPITALITY

*IN THE MISSION OF THE MIND, CHRISTIANS
WOULD DO WELL TO SEE ART AS AN
INTERACTION BETWEEN HOST AND GUEST*

How might men and women with a Christian worldview engage the art world? Great minds have posed this question many times and in many ways across the centuries. Along with Calvin Seerveld and other reformational theologians such as Abraham Kuyper, Herman Dooyeweerd and Hans Rookmaaker, I suggest that art in all forms operates as analogy and hints at the mysterious; furthermore, Christians should create art that ‘analogs’ the creation-fall-redemption narrative of Christianity.

Put another way, our goal should not be to merely cultivate a Christian aesthetic taste. Rather, we should view art as an act of hospitality that reflects God’s hospitality as Creator toward his creation.

Imagine that a friend invites you to come dine with them. When you arrive, the host presents a well-cooked, creative and nourishing meal in a beautiful

atmosphere. In the analogy, the host is like the artist and the guest is the one who engages with the art. When an

“ DOES IT
COMMUNICATE A
CLEAR MESSAGE ABOUT
REALITY, AND IS THAT
MESSAGE TRUE? ”

artist offers a work to an audience, they draw upon their various capacities and resources, opening up a room of their inner world to public view. Their posture is one of vulnerability and exposure, but it should not descend to manipulation.

Imagine, conversely, that when you arrive the room is messy, the meal contains spoiled ingredients, and the host dominates dinnertime conversation

with narcissistic remarks, never pausing to hear your response. The ‘gift’ is neither excellent nor nourishing, and the ‘hospitality’ has been falsely offered.

Notice the responsibility of both the host and the guest in the analogy. The viewer—or listener, or reader—receives the artwork and consequently faces a choice: either to acknowledge both the artist and their art with the gratitude and respect of a good guest, or to clutch and criticise with the expectations of a consumer. There are, of course, many intermediate choices between these two extremes and perhaps most importantly I should emphasise that gratitude does not exclude honest critical thinking. The viewer may choose to reject artwork that is narcissistic or ‘inhospitable,’ while still honouring the inherent worth and humanity of the artist.

One meal cannot contain all of the ingredients and flavours available to us in the world; similarly, one artwork cannot necessarily depict the entire account of Christianity, nor should it attempt to do so. However, art should illuminate an aspect of our story in a way that draws us more deeply into the truth, goodness, and beauty of the narrative as a whole. To quote from Seerveld’s book *Rainbows for the Fallen World*, “Peculiar to art is a parable character, a metaphoric intensity, an elusive play in its artifactual presentation of meanings apprehended. Art calls to our attention in capital, cursive letters, as it were, what usually flits by in reality as fine print.”

If Christ is the Redeeming Lord over all of life, then no subject should be barred from the artist: he should use his art to rejoice in beauty but also bemoan brokenness and cry out for help. Similarly, those engaging with art should not reject a piece because of its dark or difficult subject matter, but rather approach it with a questioning mind. Is it technically excellent? Does it communicate a clear message about reality, and is that message true? These, and other questions, can enhance the environment of hospitality and offer unique challenge and motivation for artists. Above all, we must remember that art and beauty are good gifts that were both created and reclaimed for us by God, the sacrificial host who invites us to join with him in bringing about the renewal of all things.

By William Lane Craig

Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California

EXTRACT: THE GOD REVOLUTION IN PHILOSOPHY



A PHILOSOPHER-APOLOGIST SURVEYS A PHENOMENON THAT SHOULD ENCOURAGE ANYONE CONCERNED WITH 'THE MISSION OF THE MIND': THE SURPRISING RESURGENCE OF GOD IN ANGLO-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY OVER THE LAST GENERATION

“The contemporary Western intellectual world,” declares the noted philosopher Alvin Plantinga, “is a battleground or arena in which rages a battle for men’s souls.” Three schools of thought struggle against each other in the competition to win the minds of thinking men and women: Enlightenment naturalism, post-modern anti-realism and theism, typically Christian theism. It is in the field of philosophy that the decisive battles are taking place, and the outcome of these contests will reverberate throughout the university and ultimately Western culture. In recent decades the battle lines have dramatically shifted.

Since the late 1960s Christian philosophers have been coming out of the closet and defending the truth of the Christian worldview with philosophically sophisticated arguments in the finest scholarly journals and professional societies. At the same time that theologians were writing God’s obituary, a new generation of philosophers was re-discovering his vitality. And the face of Anglo-American philosophy has been transformed as a result.

The return of God

Just a few years after its ‘death of God’ issue, Time magazine ran a similar red on black cover story, only this time the question read: “Is God coming back to

life?” That’s how it must have seemed to those theological morticians of the 1960s! During the 1970s, interest in philosophy of religion continued to grow, and in 1980 Time found itself running another major story entitled “Modernizing the case for God”, in which it described the movement among contemporary philosophers to refurbish the traditional arguments for

using a tough-minded intellectualism in defence of that belief that was formerly lacking on their side of the debate.

‘Academically respectable’ faith

To give you some feel for the impact of this revolution in Anglo-American philosophy, I want to quote from an article

“PHILOSOPHY IS THE MOST STRATEGIC DISCIPLINE TO BE INFLUENCED FOR CHRIST”

God’s existence. *Time* marvelled:

“In a quiet revolution in thought and argument that hardly anybody could have foreseen only two decades ago, God is making a comeback. Most intriguingly, this is happening not among theologians or ordinary believers, but in the crisp intellectual circles of academic philosophers, where the consensus had long banished the Almighty from fruitful discourse.”

According to the article, the noted American philosopher Roderick Chisholm believes that the reason that atheism was so influential a generation ago is that the brightest philosophers were atheists; but, he says, today many of the brightest philosophers are theists, and they are

by Quentin Smith which appeared in the fall of 2001 in the secularist journal *Philo* lamenting what Smith called “the desecularization of academia that evolved in philosophy departments since the late 1960s.” Smith, himself a prominent atheist philosopher, writes:

The secularization of mainstream academia began to quickly unravel upon the publication of Plantinga’s influential book, God and Other Minds, in 1967. It became apparent to the philosophical profession that this book displayed that realist theists were not outmatched by naturalists in terms of the most valued standards of analytic philosophy: conceptual

precision, rigor of argumentation, technical erudition, and an in-depth defense of an original world-view. This book, followed seven years later by Plantinga's even more impressive book, *The Nature of Necessity*, made it manifest that a realist theist was writing at the highest qualitative level of analytic philosophy, on the same playing field as Carnap, Russell, Moore, Grünbaum, and other naturalists. . . .

Naturalists passively watched as realist versions of theism, most influenced by Plantinga's writings, began to sweep through the philosophical community, until today perhaps one-quarter or one-third of philosophy professors are theists, with most being orthodox Christians.

In philosophy, it became, almost overnight, 'academically respectable' to argue for theism, making philosophy a favoured field of entry for the most intelligent and talented theists entering academia today.

Smith concludes, "God is not 'dead' in academia; he returned to life in the late 1960s and is now alive and well in his last academic stronghold, philosophy departments." This is the testimony of a prominent atheist philosopher to the change that has taken place before his eyes in Anglo-American philosophy. Now I think he's probably exaggerating when he estimates that one quarter to one third of American philosophers are theists; but what his estimates do reveal is the perceived impact of Christian philosophers upon this field. Like Gideon's army, a committed minority of activists can have an impact far out of proportion to their numbers. The principal error that Smith makes is calling philosophy departments God's "last stronghold" at the university. On the contrary, philosophy departments are a beachhead, from which operations can be launched to impact other disciplines at the university for Christ.

The importance of philosophy

Since philosophy is foundational to every discipline of the university, philosophy is the most strategic discipline to be influenced for Christ. Whether it be Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Education, Philosophy of Law, Philosophy of Mathematics, or what have you, every discipline will have an associated field of philosophy foundational to that discipline. The philosophy of these respective

disciplines is not theologically neutral. Adoption of presuppositions consonant with or inimical to orthodox Christian theism will have a significant leavening effect throughout that discipline which will, in turn, dispose its practitioners for or against the Christian faith. Christian philosophers, by influencing the philosophy of these various disciplines, help to shape the thinking of the entire university in such a way as to dispose our future generations of leaders to the reception of the gospel.

Why is this important? Simply because

“TODAY
MANY OF THE
BRIGHTEST
PHILOSOPHERS
ARE THEISTS”

the single most important institution shaping Western culture is the university. It is at the university that our future political leaders, our journalists, our teachers, our business executives, our lawyers, our artists, will be trained. It is at the university that they will formulate or, more likely, simply absorb the worldview that will shape their lives. And since these are the opinion-makers and leaders who shape our culture, the worldview that they imbibe at the university will be the one that shapes our culture. If the Christian worldview can be restored to a place of prominence and respect at the university, it will have a leavening effect throughout society. If we change the university, we change our culture through those who shape culture.

Why is this important? Simply because the gospel is never heard in isolation. It is always heard against the background of the cultural milieu in which one lives. A person raised in a cultural milieu in which Christianity is still seen as an intellectually viable option will display an openness to the gospel which a person who is secularised will not. Change the university and you will change culture through those who shape culture.

This extract has been edited.

The full version of this article first appeared on reasonablefaith.org as The Revolution in Anglo-American Philosophy.

More from William Lane Craig at reasonablefaith.org/william-lane-craig

GOD AND THE PHILOSOPHERS

Further reading to challenge your mind

There is a God:

How the world's most notorious atheist changed his mind

Anthony Flew and Roy Abraham Varghese

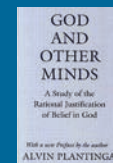


Anthony Flew was a previous generation's Dawkins. He debated CS Lewis and was famous for his philosophical debunking of God. Then, quite late in life, he was convinced by philosophical logic that there must be a creator-God. Fascinating reading.

God and other minds:

Study of the rational justification of belief in God

Alvin Plantinga



This 1967 classic from analytical philosopher Plantinga made a huge impact with its argument that the existence of God, like the existence of all minds, could no more be disproved than it could be proved.

The potting shed

Graham Greene



A play by Catholic novelist Graham Greene telling the story of a Dawkins-esque scourge of religion and his family's struggle with a supernatural event. Christians should be funding theatre and film adaptations

The existence of God

Richard Swinburne



Oxford philosophy professor, Richard Swinburne's classic work, surveying the different strands of argument for the existence of God

and concluding that the weight of evidence points towards God's probable existence. Widely considered to be one of the best theistic arguments in philosophy.

By Dr. Sharon Dirckx

Tutor at the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, speaker for Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM) and an author of *Why? Looking at God, evil and personal suffering*

SCIENCE & THE MISSION OF THE MIND

THE FALSE DICHOTOMY OF ‘SCIENCE V FAITH’ IS UNDERMINED BY THE ORDERLINESS OF THE SCIENTIFIC UNIVERSE

During a recent speaking engagement I mentioned that the aim of RZIM is in ‘helping the believer think and the thinker believe’. At the end, someone objected that the emphasis on ‘thinking’ was misplaced, as most of his congregants *feel* rather than *think*. At first glance this objection appeals. We need answers that reach into the very heart of a person, not dry intellectual answers. I couldn’t agree more. But to portray thinking and feeling as mutually exclusive presents a false dichotomy and over-simplifies what it means to be human.

Behavioural Psychology exists because the mind and emotions and subsequent actions are connected, as does Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, in which positive ‘self-talk’ impacts well-being and behaviour. The mind impacts the emotions, and the emotions impact the mind. We see this in Scripture, for example when the psalmist intersects his own thought-life by speaking to his very soul and redirecting his thoughts to God, “*Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my saviour and my God*” (Psalm 42: 5). It is not by

coincidence that Jesus emphasises that the most important commandment of all is to “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all*

your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12: 30).

What is the role of the mind in the scientific realm? Science is assumed by many to fall naturally into the lap of atheism. I grew up with these very assumptions, until I attended a Grill-a-Christian event as a Biochemistry undergraduate and asked the question, “Surely you can’t believe in God and be a scientist at the same time?” The answer that they were operating on different planes, answering different questions was, for me at that time, rocket-science that I had never before encountered. I had assumed that one can either believe in

God or science but not both. Since science is verifiable, repeatable, and often visible, whereas faith is unverifiable, unrepeatable and invisible, the sensible choice was to choose science. Another false dichotomy.

A key question to consider is, “How do we account for the underlying consistency in the natural world?” The scientific method proceeds on the basis that the natural world and the human mind are

“*EVERY TIME A SCIENTIST DESIGNS AND CARRIES OUT A NEW EXPERIMENT THEY EXERCISE FAITH IN THE ORDERLINESS OF NATURE*”

undergirded by orderliness. If a study is carried out in Oxford and repeated in Cambridge, then, if the conditions are constant, the results should be the same. If Cambridge produces different data then we would call into question the original data from Oxford precisely because of the assumption that there is an underlying orderliness in nature. Without this consistency in nature and in the human mind, nothing would be repeatable and verifiable. The debate is often portrayed as “science versus faith’ and yet every time a scientist designs and carries out a new experiment they exercise faith in the orderliness of nature.



“ THE CHRISTIAN GOD IS PRO-SCIENCE AND PRO-TECHNOLOGY ”

The naturalistic view (part of atheism which believes that nature accounts for everything in life), is that ‘matter’ has always existed and ‘mind’ has emerged from ‘matter’. Contrast this with theism, which holds that ‘mind’, (the mind of God), has always existed and ‘matter’ has emerged from ‘mind’. Which view best accounts for the underlying orderliness?

The 20th century geneticist J.B.S. Haldane points out that if the human mind is purely a product of the blind amalgamation of atoms then why should we believe any thought it throws out, whether religious, irreligious or scientific?

“It seems to me immensely unlikely that mind is a mere by-product of matter. For if

my mental processes are determined wholly by the motions of atoms in my brain I have no reason to suppose that my beliefs are true. They may be sound chemically, but that does not make them sound logically. And hence I have no reason for supposing my brain to be composed of atoms.”

J.B.S. Haldane, Possible Worlds

As Professor John Lennox points out, the very earliest human in existence was engaged in the God-given endeavor of taxonomy, in other words using his mind both logically and creatively to name the animals. Not only is the Christian God pro-science and pro-technology, but one could argue that he is the very Being through whom they are made possible.

By Phillip Johnston

Staff member at L'Abri Fellowship in Southborough, Massachusetts (USA) and undertaking theological studies at Covenant Theological Seminary, Phillip studied film at university and is leading a Malick film festival at the English L'Abri fellowship in November 2013

TERRENCE MALICK, FAITH & FILM

SUBTLETY AND BEAUTY PROVE TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN COMMUNICATING CHRISTIAN VALUES IN CINEMA THAN SIMPLISTIC DOGMA AND SLEDGEHAMMER MORALITY TALES



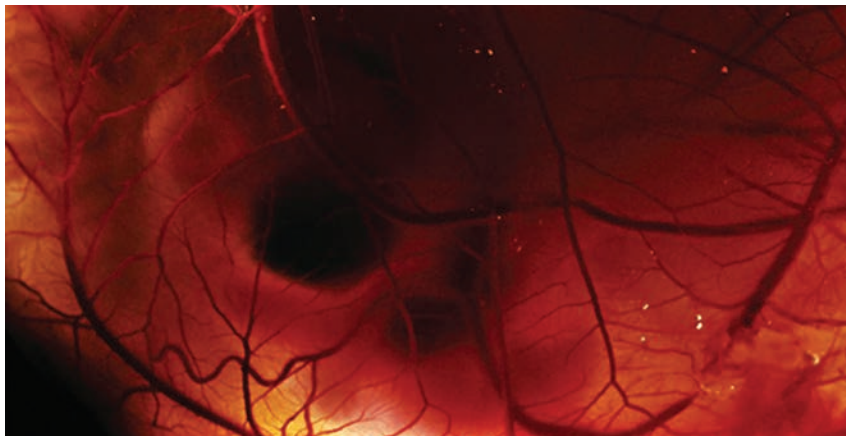
The plot was rather simple. Sylvia is a teenage girl living at home with her father. Her mother died in childbirth and her father is very protective, slaving away at a Christian film distribution office by day and praying at his daughter's bedside by night, before switching off the lights. After a less-than-savoury suitor threatens their relationship, Sylvia soon realises, after a brief rebellion, that her father is always right about everything. She soon begins courting a nice, sensibly dressed Christian young man who doesn't mind her father joining them on dates. Marriage ensues, and from her marriage bed Sylvia phones



“ MALICK'S FILMS ARE THE ANTITHESIS OF HOLLYWOOD SPECTACLE AND SLOPPY CHRISTIAN FILMMAKING ”

her father so he can pray with her one last time.

Of all the Christian movies I saw growing up, this one comes to mind as the worst. Like so many Christian films, it failed miserably in doing exactly what it intended to do: inspire. No doubt the filmmakers wanted to give their viewers an inspirational story putting forth a particular vision of the good life, but their Sylvia story possessed no imaginative power. It was fashioned for an audience who desired entertainment to confirm values they already had. This is clearly not the mission of the Christian mind when it comes to filmmaking, but where can we look to see Christians making films that offer something different?



I have a hunch. His name is Terrence Malick and he's a reclusive American filmmaker from Texas. With a sharp eye for natural beauty and a penchant for quasi-philosophical poetic first-person narration, Malick's films are the antithesis of modern Hollywood spectacle and the sloppy Christian film. He is universally respected by critics who have 'converted' to his aesthetic but, as Jon Baskin in the Los Angeles Review of Books notes, "there remains the question of how to respond to Malick's deeply unfamiliar teaching – for his call...to convert, not just to his art, but also to the way of life promoted by his art." Baskin himself is a nonbeliever, and Terrence Malick has him stumped.

Malick has directed only six films since 1973 – four of them since 1998. Those four films – *The Thin Red Line*, *The New World*, *The Tree of Life* and *To the Wonder* – hold legendary status among many audiences and critics. His first two films – *Badlands* and *Days of Heaven* – were made in the 1970s and tell stories of men who commit murder and run, but when Malick returned from a twenty-year hiatus with *The Thin Red Line* in 1999, he presented his audience with a very different main character in Private Witt (Jim Caviezel, who later played Jesus in Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*). Though Witt is faced with the horrors of war in Guadalcanal, he

insists in the face of his fellow soldiers' cynicism that he has seen 'another world' – a world simultaneously chilled with violence

and rapturously beautiful. Witt sees the divine spark in even the most hardened people. The same is true of Pocahontas in *The New World*. Malick sees it too, and his camera lets his audience join in.

His latest two films add explicitly Christian themes to this vision. The centrepiece of *The Tree of Life* is an extended sequence picturing the creation of the world. The climax of *To the Wonder* follows a Catholic priest visiting the mentally handicapped while he recites the Lorica of St. Patrick ("Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me...") in voiceover. Critics have noted that the vague spirituality of Malick's previous films has been totally supplanted by a Christian ethic in his most recent work. However, unlike our Sylvia story, Malick's films do not seek to communicate propositions about his beliefs to an audience who shares them. Rather, his films are fashioned within the world of his beliefs and given to his audience as a kind of mysterious gift. They leave more questions than answers, but the questions

“MALICK'S FILMS DO NOT SEEK TO COMMUNICATE PROPOSITIONS ABOUT HIS BELIEFS”

are hard to leave behind.

There is another famous storyteller who left more questions with his audience than he did answers. The four canonical gospels are riddled with questions asked by Jesus.

"If you love those who love you, what reward will you get?"

"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves?"

"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

"Where is your faith?"

The list could go on. None are easy questions, but they have undeniable sticking power. They lodge in the mind and stay there. No doubt they stuck with Jesus' original hearers and did the intended work of provocation in the hope that a door to a new world would be opened for the hearers. A Christian filmmaker working skillfully cannot hope for anything less.

The canon of Malick



The Thin Red Line (1998)

This sprawling World War II drama is what emerged from Terrence Malick's twenty-year hiatus from filmmaking in 1998. War will never be beautiful, but *The Thin Red Line* may be the most beautiful war film ever made.



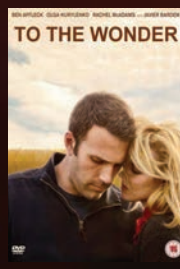
The Tree of Life (2011)

When Malick's career comes to an end, *The Tree of Life* will be seen as a climactic moment in his body of work. Everything resides here: autobiographical detail, meditation on the biblical book of Job, the creation of the world and all the relentless energy of Malick's spiritual search.



The New World (2005)

Malick's vastly misunderstood 'Pocahontas film' is never quite what it seems: a romance? A period piece set at America's founding? An ecological tone poem? Either way, *The New World* is new at each viewing, a testament to the director's rich perception of American history and cultural life.



To the Wonder (2012)

If characters in *The Tree of Life* must choose between 'the way of nature' and 'the way of grace,' *To the Wonder* shows us characters who are finding this choice impossible—or at least very hard. Though tonally distant from the exultant *Tree of Life*, *To the Wonder* evokes many modern predicaments with clarity and offers flickerings of a more excellent way.

A SELECTION OF RELEVANT FILM AND LITERATURE TO HELP YOU INVESTIGATE FURTHER

BOOK
ETHICS OF HOPE

Jürgen Moltmann
SCM Press 2012
Price: £40 from scmpress.co.uk

Are you searching for a biblically driven Christian ethic to challenge scientific bio-medical advances that threaten to endanger life at its beginning and end? An ecological theology that relates to the earth on which we live? Perhaps you seek an articulation of a hope that inspires Christian resistance to a unified global culture of growth and consumerism? Are you interested in a transformative eschatology that has inspired peacemakers like Martin Luther King and Ghandi to “make ploughshares out of swords”? Then *Ethics of Hope* is a must-read book for you. Jürgen Moltmann writes as someone who has clearly lived life in the light of the Resurrection but has also experienced its pain.

Gareth Wilde is pastor of Broadmead Baptist Church, Woodford Green.

FILM
THE TREE OF LIFE

Director: Terrence Malick
20th Century Fox, 2011
Price: £9.93 from Blockbuster

The Passion of the Christ it ain't: that's the first thing you need to know about *The Tree of Life*. The second is that it is arguably the finest, most ambitiously complex film meditating on Christian truth ever made. A poetic masterpiece about God and our relationship with him, its palette ranging from an ordinary family in Texas to the creation of the universe and the forming of the earth, this film weaves God's response to Job into a commonplace story of bereavement. If it's easy platitudes or a shallow recital of dogma you're looking for, search elsewhere. This is birth and sin and repentance and eternity, painted on a subtle and terrible canvas. Wonderful Christian cinema.

Jonathan Langley is editor of Mission Catalyst

STUDY GUIDE
IS GOD REAL?

William Lane Craig and Charles Taliaferro
Inter-Varsity Press, 2007
Price: £3.99 from ivpbooks.com

In the era of post modernity, apologetics has had to explore fresh directions. Perhaps one of the most helpful movements in recent years has been the quiet revolution within philosophy. Authors Lane Craig and Taliaferro, leaning heavily upon Ravi Zacharias, have produced a masterful discussion guide for small group use. The guide draws upon Scripture and contemporary philosophical discourse to create six thoughtful sessions, from the basic pre-suppositions of pre-creation to the reasonableness of experiential encounter. Whether for leaders seeking to challenge thoughtful sceptics or for evangelists wishing to bolster their apologetic firepower, this intelligent guide is a welcome addition to the RZIM Critical Questions series and a helpful primer for intelligent group discussions.

Steve Sanderson is Manager for Mission Projects at BMS World Mission

BOOK
THE GOSPEL IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY

Lesslie Newbigin
SPCK Publishing (reissued) 2004
Price: £16.99 from spckpublishing.co.uk

Returning from a life spent as a missionary in South India, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin was shocked at the perceived privatisation of faith in the Western world. In this seminal work, Newbigin outlines his core conviction that the gospel concerns the Kingdom of God, “his rule of over all things and all peoples”. Newbigin argues that everyone, be they scientists, economists, historians or others, is shaped by their culture, and that culture's faith and tradition. The relevance of the gospel to every part of culture is his central thesis, the gospel of Christ crucified. This is one of the formative books of our generation, a masterpiece in bringing together gospel and culture.

David Kerrigan is General Director of BMS World Mission



Mission Catalyst



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