

# Letters

## A Response to George Jennings on Mam and Kraft

In his writing, "Living in Babylon with Darwin, Marx, Freud and Deloria" (Journal ASA 9/83), George J. Jennings has given readers a grand tour of the phenomenon of modern-day Babylon as seen from four perspectives.

I would like to comment upon two statements made by Reverend Jennings—the first: "It goes without saying that Marx must have been influenced more than he **perhaps** would cared to have admitted by biblical ethics despite his disavowal of religion."

This statement demands a refutation, and ironically is done so in a sense by Jennings' writings themselves within the same paper. Just prior to the quote above (pg. 140), is a statement of those things that Marx championed in the cause of man. On page 141 note Vine Deloria, Jr.'s attributes of a society prior to its exposure to Christian thought. The degrees of sophistication perhaps are not the same, but the 'flavor' is close. Without the Scriptures, the Native Americans came to their own code of ethics, and I say that it was without the Scriptures' influence that Marx came to his code of ethics in spite of the fact that he was born a Jew and as a child was a Lutheran. Man is capable of "manufacturing" good—a sociological 'good' that does, in fact, benefit society; **but** in many cases, this good has nothing to do with any God—man orientation.

Thus, the question must be asked: "Why would anyone be motivated to do 'good' if not to please God?" A question asked by Erasmus . . . it could be answered that to create and do sociological 'good' is in reality the path of least resistance through life's challenges. At its basest denominator, society strides progressively forward more easily on the path of 'good' than on the path of 'evil' and turmoil. The path of good is paved with harmony and cooperation; the path of evil is paved with frustration and discontent and sometimes annihilation.

At this juncture, it is important to point out that in the Marxist society—and to varying degrees within the Native American societies—there is no accommodation for dynamic individualism. The Marxist society is viewed in much the same way as we would view human body cells grouping together to form a larger bodily unit. Marxist society is, in fact, a functioning body organ—which if it were ever to cover the entire globe would then become the superbeing as envisioned during the early days of formulation of Marxist-Leninist thought. Instead of our "body of Christ," it would be the Marxists' "body of man." However, for the organ to produce—and to not feel the 'pains' of illness (social upheaval)—a common code of 'good' quickly forms. This form of 'good' really has no relationship with the 'good' of God because the 'good' of Marx is a good **of** social expediency. The good of the State can have redeemable features that closely resemble the attributes and desires of God. However, there is the one big difference: man's 'good' is from man and thus serves man advantageously as deemed proper by the ruling power.

When the 'good' of the Marxist society, for example, is stimulated to march a path of self-serving errancy, then as Alexander Solzhenitsyn comments throughout his Gulag "triptych," the organ becomes cancerous and the cancer metastasizes—as has been the case since 1920 in the Soviet Union.

Marx's 'goods' came not from any biblical influence. He just

closely scrutinized the results of men like Robert Owen (CAPITAL, Vol. I) who had conducted limited "worker society" experiments, and along with Frederick Engels took note of the results and the factors that lead to the various outcomes. Both men saw the exploitation of the working class by ruling capitalism, and formulated a new and workable philosophy.

Marx's entire systematology presses for the betterment of the working class 'whole', even to the extent of **suppression** of individualism. **What** is surprising is that workers **around** the world, shortly after Marx's death, considered his writings as their **bible—even** though few could understand what was written. **Marx's abstractions**, in some cases as difficult as mathematics, nonetheless appealed to a working class that used the philosophy to create their own **state** religion; a counter-Christian force that changed the world. **This was** a choice of "proletarian reason" over "religion."

The second point that I wish to comment on is Jennings' referral to Charles Kraft's statement on page 142: "Theologians need to use the language of the behavioral science in terms of their approach to problems, their conclusions, and their articulation."

What a true but grossly-ignored statement!

In all frankness, it must be asked, when was the last **time** 'recognizable, definable and contemporary' theology had witnessed as to its viable penetration of religious society? Within **observed** church communities, I have not picked up on any discernible awareness on the part of the congregation toward any theology other than Scriptural hermeneutics. (These observations were made within the Baptist community.)

Obviously, the reason for any gap between **theology and** the laity is because there is not an existent, accessible **avenue** of cross-communication.

In all too frequent cases, theology has generated unto itself an elitist society of membership of which I admit reluctant participation. Theology should support and amplify the Scriptures and not go off onto vistas of esoteric questionableness. Christian theology has a tendency of muddying the waters of Christian faith. Can we not all point to instances where varied theological contributions into the thoughts of a believing Christian served only to confuse that person? Of course, the prime modern example (from a **bona fide** theologian) is Rudolf Bultmann's theology. In his move to demythologize the New Testament, Bultmann sorely 'muddied' the waters of many believers. For others, like myself, however, Bultmann's works added one more diopter power to my spiritual eyeglasses.

As Kraft says, ". . . theology needs to use the language. . ."; may I add that theology needs also to exercise responsible maturity and a direction of purpose before thrusting itself upon a given society. To paraphrase a quote of Marx from his *Theses on Feuerbach*: "Philosophers (ne: theologians) have only **interpreted** the world, in various ways; the point is to **change** it."

Let also this question be asked: "How viable is **theology?**" A fair question, especially when Christian society claims that theology and theologians do not communicate with them.

When a venture is made into theological situations, one **factor** should be kept in mind: the Scriptures were written in **koine Greek** to be read by every walk of society—from the simplest of us to **the most** intelligent. Where, then, is the sanction for a theology that does not communicate as straightforwardly as God's Word does? Where is the value of such thought if it doesn't communicate? It would be likened to shouting into a cave and hearing no echo.

There **comes** a time for every man, upon reading Scripture and applying to life what has been absorbed, when confusing (and even threatening) theologies must fade away and the Holy Spirit takes a precedence of clarification and understanding while providing **direction**. It is not to be said, though, that man should not use his intellect to its fullest, but let it be remembered that the Scriptures are the primary building block in any rational construction of interpretation of God's nature and methods.

Scripture is our only benchmark of reality. **A** bold statement, but history, as man can record it, is transient at best when it **comes** to documentation of motivational occurrence. Theology can become even worse; it can degenerate into pure legalism and serve to hamstring otherwise faithful believers. Fortunately, in its opposite form, theology can draw the mind closer to God—if, and only if—it is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Theology is at its true calling when it strives to correlate the physical world with the existential Christ happening. Theology should not waste the time of everyone concerned with **"God is Dead"** and on-again and off-again themes of Jesus is God and Jesus isn't God, etc. Such **themes** cannot be entertained if any 'good' is the expected **outcome**. I have often felt that if a choice had to be made between a theologian or a good Sunday school teacher to guide Christians, it would be hands down for those cut from the "Moody cloth"

There are times when theology shares a common trait with the 'good' of Marxism—it, too, seeks a path of rational least resistance and in some cases strives to do away with the element of faith; and the sometimes hard-&obey demands of discipleship (this is to be found in today's "pop" theologies.)

Contributors to *The Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, such as Jennings and Vern **Sheridan Poythress**, do not fall into such a trap. They are methodological realists and **because** of their orientations, these eminent writers do not take their eyes from the 'benchmark' and stray off on to some, disassociated **tangent**. How **refreshing** it is to read the works of **people** who are not only aware of, but who—strive to manifest for **all**, the logical **portrait of the theologic/physical** vista without the **overusage** of three all too familiar terms: *a priori*, *creatio ex nihilo* and *Deus ex machina*. Just once it would be **surprising** to **see** a writing using—instead of *Deus ex machina*, the phrase *δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ*.

The '*Journal's*' commodity of mature reason and concise delivery on the Part of its contributors is becoming harder and harder to find in **today's** society and religion. It can **only** be **hoped** that others will take notice and follow suit.

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