

1988

Review of Hunt's "Beyond Seduction"

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Recommended Citation

McMinn, Mark R., "Review of Hunt's "Beyond Seduction"" (1988). *Faculty Publications - Grad School of Clinical Psychology*. Paper 182.
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FEATURED REVIEWS

on cults, mysticism, and psychic phenomenon. He was a certified public accountant for twenty years prior to his full-time writing and speaking career.

In his recent best-selling book, *The Seduction of Christianity* (reviewed in *JPT*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 168-170), Dave Hunt seemed to overstep himself in describing the seductive influence of mysticism and “sorcery” on Christianity. In this sequel, *Beyond Seduction*, he directs his criticism in a somewhat more moderate tone toward many topics including church discipline, self-esteem, psychology, positive thinking, science, and imagery.

It is tempting to begin a review with an overview of Hunt’s valid and useful points. He has many with which I, and I assume many of my evangelical colleagues, would concur. But to do so would mask what is at heart a pejorative and divisive form of writing. Undoubtedly his concern is sincere and his motives are noble, but his product is unreasonable and his scholarship is open to question.

While self-esteem is a major target throughout the book, Hunt seems to confuse self-esteem with self-absorption. In the first chapter he concludes, “It takes a simple but firm decision *based upon the facts* to exchange the self-life for the Christ-life” (p. 17, *italics his*). One immediately wonders what the facts are and how one obtains them. Does following Christ necessitate self-belittlement? Later, he gives an example of narcissism to illustrate the failure of self-esteem, insisting there is no difference between self-esteem and pride. In his arguments that we are to be Christ-centered instead of self-centered he appears unaware that *poor* self-esteem is often what makes one self-centered.

The author argues that correction is a significant need in evangelicalism despite our preoccupation with acceptance. He argues that Jesus’ ministry was aimed largely at correction and we have today strayed from the distinctives of church discipline. He concludes, “From Genesis to Revelation, a major theme of the Bible is correction” (p. 38). But this argument isn’t internally consistent. Is not acceptance also a major theme of Scripture? The gospel message is one of acceptance. The Pharisees were keenly aware of the need for correction but they were rarely accepting. Both acceptance and correction are biblical themes. It is acceptance that takes the hostility out of correction.

Later chapters argue against the scientific way of knowing in favor of returning to Hunt’s vision of biblical Christianity. The facts are apparently gathered only through certain rational activities (e.g., Bible study) and never through empiricism. Hunt is consistent throughout the book in valuing rational ways of knowing over empirical ways of knowing. For example, he quotes such diverse authorities as Bernie Zilbergeld and Jay Adams to support conclusions like, “psychotherapy doesn’t work. . . . Christians who naively . . . turn to this bankrupt and godless system both dishonor their Lord and rob

THIS SIDE OF SEDUCTION

Hunt, D. (1987).

Beyond Seduction. Eugene, OR: Harvest House. Paper. 282 pp. \$9.95. ISBN 0-89081-558-5

Reviewed by MARK R. McMINN

Dave Hunt is a writer with eleven published books

themselves of the true joy and victory that can be found only in trusting Christ alone" (p. 117). But never does he mention the empirical data that do in fact modestly support the efficacy of psychotherapy.

Psychology was cited as the "ideal vehicle" for seduction in his earlier book, where Hunt criticized the work of James Dobson, Paul Meier, Frank Minirth, and others. His sequel is more of the same, adding Bruce Narramore to the seducer list. The essence of his arguments can be summarized with the following statements: (a) psychology is not a real science, (b) psychology is a set of unrelated theories developed by ungodly individuals, (c) all psychological problems are actually spiritual problems, (d) Jesus never talked about psychology or psychological problems, and (e) the Bible is all we need for spiritual/psychological problems.

These arguments are not new for Christian psychologists. Hunt, and other critics of Christian psychology, argue against integration, concluding that integrated Christian psychology compromises Christianity. It is a supportable perspectivist position, but Hunt does not support it with intellectual rigor. This can be seen in several ways.

First, he makes unreasonable attacks, implying a conspiracy of Christian psychology. He writes, "Christian psychology has convinced many of today's Christian leaders that the gospel needs to be tailored to the popular selfisms of our time in order to make it appealing to the secular mind" (p. 43). Later he blames Christian psychology for the lack of evangelism he has observed and states that going to a psychotherapist is "much the same as turning oneself over to the priest of any other rival religion" (p. 114). He also makes an unreasonable attack on the mission of Christian colleges, implying they teach students to compromise Christianity. This is consistent with his later assertion that "true faith is a matter of the heart and not the head" (p. 106), a distinction that seems trivial and untenable to this reviewer.

Second, he views emotional problems in a simplistic way. He concludes, "There is no emotional problem that psychology attempts to deal with for which the Bible does not claim that God Himself offers a complete cure that can be received by faith" (p. 114). This naive assertion overlooks many advances in health psychology, neuropsychiatry, and clinical psychology. Similarly, in both *Seduction* and *Beyond Seduction* Hunt uses associationism as a logical framework. Because relaxation techniques are similar to meditation and since meditation is used in Eastern mysticism, then relaxation must be seductive to Christianity. One is reminded of why fire engines are red: Fire engines have 8 men and 4 wheels, 8 and 4 make 12, 12 inches is a foot, a foot is a ruler, Queen Elizabeth was a ruler, Queen Elizabeth was a ship, ships sail the sea, seas have fish, fish have fins, the Fins fought the Russians, Russians are red, so fire engines are red. Of course this is hyperbole, but the logical structure is similar.

Third, Hunt reasons from an emotional base. He writes, "Psychology is clearly a religion, and its

hostility to Christianity is a matter of record so well-known that we need not even document it here" (p. 110). Good scholarship requires documentation of such assertions even if they are quite clear to the author. He includes several quotes from readers of *Seduction* to document his points, implying credibility by quoting *selective* responses to support his views.

Hunt's recent books have been reviewed many times. His valid concerns, of which he has many, have been heard. It is equally important to critically recognize the weaknesses in his arguments. He is concerned that we don't "water down" (p. 118) Christianity, but his arguments may themselves water down the Christian distinctives of grace and acceptance and compassion. Hunt correctly writes, "We must be careful not to approach the Bible with our own prior opinions in an attempt to find verses that we can somehow use to justify what we already want to believe" (p. 128). Hopefully his readers will do this, recognizing a need to stay this side of the seduction paranoia rather than going beyond seduction.