

Steven A. Carr and Franklin A. Meyer, *Celebrate Life: Hope for a Culture Preoccupied with Death* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990). 269 pgs., paperback. \$9.95. Reviewed by E. Calvin Beisner.

Looking for quick and simple answers to some of the commonest contemporary challenges to Christian values? *Celebrate Life* piles them on hot and heavy in an entertaining but challenging, sobering but upbeat whirlwind tour of the death culture and how Christians can respond to it.

In eleven brief chapters, authors Steven Carr and Franklin Meyer--who operate a ministry in Schaumburg, Illinois, called The Christian Connection--rebut eleven myths that are leading their proponents to unwittingly embrace death instead of life. The myths are: (1) that the world is, or soon will be, overpopulated; (2) that the world suffers from a shortage of food, or soon will; (3) that there are no efficient mechanisms to distribute the food and other wealth produced in the world without resort to centralized planning; (4) that new technologies present more threats than promises for the human future; (5) that the environment is worse than ever and fast deteriorating; (6) that we're running out of resources; (7) that people are faced with a necessary choice between quantity and quality of human life, necessitating a "lifeboat-ethics" approach to social problems; (8) that life originated by evolution; (9) that Christians' best response to deteriorating moral culture is to escape; (10) that people should be thinking now of producing a "master race" through eugenics; (11) that man controls his own destiny as if he were God.

In six ensuing chapters, the authors set forth practical steps Christians can take to get involved in the battle to turn things around on all of these fronts--especially in the battle against abortion, which the authors paint as the most pressing issue confronting us today. These clearly arise out of the authors' own hands-on experience and could readily be used to launch effective strategies and tactics by local Christian groups and individuals to fight local battles.

The chapters are of uneven quality. The ones on population, food production, environment, and resources are the strongest so far as cogency of argument and adequacy of evidence are concerned. Those on distribution, science and technology, and evolution are pretty thin on both theoretical and empirical substance. Those on the master race and the deification of man seem far fetched. (But then, the idea that euthanasia and infanticide and the use of fetal organs in medical operations and research would have become nearly routine by 1990 would have seemed far fetched in 1950.)

In fact, one might criticize most of the book for an apparently superficial understanding of the theoretical issues underlying many of the controversies it discusses and a paucity of credible empirical evidence to back up some of its claims of fact. (For instance, on p. 115 the authors uncritically pass on an assertion that historic population growth rates might have been around 2 percent per year, then--appearing to be generous--adopts for the purposes of its own argument the much slower rate of only 1/2 percent per year. But the most credible historical studies of demography indicate that, aside from the most recent 180-plus years, a historic average of about .1 percent or below is more likely.) The criticism, however true, would neglect the book's real aim, which is not to be a scholarly tome on one or all of these problems but to alert people to the problems, give them some basic answers, and point them in the right directions for gaining additional understanding and taking appropriate action. It achieves that aim well.

The book would have been made many times more valuable had the authors included, at the end of each chapter, a list of the two or at most three books that would equip readers with more in-depth answers to the problems addressed in that chapter. As it is, one can't help fretting a bit that some young Christians might march boldly into battle with nothing more than the answers provided in *Celebrate Life*, only to find themselves ill equipped to deal with arguments more sophisticated than those answered here.

*Celebrate Life* is excellent reading for high school or college students. It provides initial ammunition for many of the intellectual skirmishes they face throughout their school years and even shows them some creative and effective ways to use it. But their parents and pastors should read it, too: they need to know what the kids are facing and how to help them face it.

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