

History, Criticism and Faith. Edited by Colin Brown. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1976, 233 pp., \$4.95 paper.

This is a very important piece of work. It is made up of four essays. G. Wenham writes on "History and the Old Testament" (pp. 13-75); F. F. Bruce on the theme "Myth and History" (pp. 79-100), primarily with respect to the NT; R. T. France on "The Authenticity of the Sayings of Jesus" (101-143); and the editor concludes the volume with "History and the Believer" (147-224). Subject and name indexes are included.

Wenham's article surveys some of the contemporary approaches to OT history and, while still insisting on the necessity of criticism, argues that many theological propositions in the OT depend for their significance on the historicity of the event(s) to which they refer. Wenham provides helpful descriptions and criticisms of OT textual criticism, source criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism and historical criticism. His treatment of current theories of Pentateuchal criticism is, for its length (10 pp.), the finest I have read. The brief section on "Archaeology and the Conquest of Canaan" is a model of fairness as it seeks to explain the wildly disparate conclusions that have been drawn by various archaeologists.

F. F. Bruce is helpful in nailing down that slippery word "myth." Beginning with a description and criticism of the "myth-and-ritual" school, he moves on to treat the questions that are fundamental to a vast spectrum of current NT studies: Bultmannian and post-Bultmannian conceptions of "myth," the related demythologizing programs and the constant pitting of the historical against the theological. "We would not gather from Bultmann's writings that he has ever heard of the principle of complementarity; probably indeed he has heard of it, but clearly he has no use for it" (p. 88). Bruce's observations on the danger

of moving from form criticism to historical judgment, and his notes on the Gnostic myth (especially with respect to Eph 2:14), though brief, are quite telling.

R. T. France's article on the authenticity of the sayings of Jesus is an amended version of a paper read at a Tyndale NT study group in 1971. This article alone is worth the price of the book. It should be compulsory reading for every student of the gospels. Although France begins by pointing out that rigid presuppositions may *a priori* rule out of court all kinds of evidence that should be admitted, he rightly focuses more of his attention on the criteria of authenticity adopted by many scholars and argues forcefully (but fairly) that they are not only too narrow—being at best capable of giving what is eccentric in Jesus' teaching, not what is central—but also that they are inconsistently handled by those redaction critics who most strenuously support them. France, however, does not stop at criticizing the critics: He goes on to outline and defend the "historicist's" reaction and to draw up some arguments, both literary and historical, that constitute sane guidelines to questions of authenticity. The object of the essay, in France's own words, "is to urge that the scholar is obliged to take the Gospels as he finds them. He must reconstruct their aims and methods from what the Gospels themselves indicate, and interpret them in accordance with their intention, rather than from a dogmatic presupposition that the evangelists were either freely creative or rigidly literalistic" (p. 133).

C. Brown's excellent paper treads a twilight zone among several disciplines, each of which contributes to our understanding (or misunderstanding) of the meaning of "history" and of the nature and function of historical inquiry: semantics, philosophy, historical theology, epistemology, and the interface between history and revelation. Beginning with Kierkegaard's paradox concerning the revelation of the utterly transcendent God, so that even in the incarnation this transcendent God remains, as it were, *incognito*, Brown moves on to show how this tension has been used by Kierkegaard's successors to question the validity not only of claims to *direct* experience of God but also to claims of *any* experience of God. Brown replies, leaning in part on F. Schaeffer and A. Richardson. His treatment of miracles is excellent. Brown goes on to discuss various methods of historical inquiry and what rules and principles apply. He argues *inter alia* that the use of analogy makes treatment of miracles possible. He is careful to show what the historian can and cannot achieve and to discuss the manner in which history affects belief.

The entire symposium is characterized by fairness coupled with forthright clarity. The bibliographies, though not exhaustive and largely restricted to English, are very helpful. Small criticisms could be offered: Wenham's article suffers a few minor organizational problems, while Brown's, for all its excellence, is weak on the interface between history and revelation, and elsewhere it succumbs to ambiguity when the word "history" is used in two or three different ways in the same paragraph. But these are minor problems, so minor it is picayune of me to mention them. This book deserves the widest circulation.

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