

[1963. *Review of Theories of Revelation, by H.C. McDonald. Christianity Today 13 Sep.*]

## QUICK SURVEY

*Theories of Revelation, by H. D. McDonald (Allen & Unwin, 1963, 384 pp., 37s. 6d.). is reviewed by Gordon H. Clark, professor of philosophy, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.*

As indicated by the subtitle, *An Historical Study 1860-1960*, this volume surveys the views of biblical critics on a number of important points.

The first two chapters are philosophic and scientific, describing the unsettling effect of Darwin, Spencer, Clifford, Freud, Tillich, Brunner, and Bultmann on belief in the Bible. The third chapter surveys higher criticism. The author then discusses the significance of Christ's appeals to the Old Testament, and the critics' theories of accommodation, kenosis, and "religious" versus "historical" intention. The remaining chapters run over the various views on the Scriptures and the Word, biblical inerrancy, biblical inspiration, biblical authority, and revelation and authority.

The chief defect of the book is no doubt its chief merit: it is a quick survey of a century of criticism. The historical development is competently spread before the reader, and the material is well worth having. Obviously the author is extremely well informed. Some 600 authors are mentioned, but of course only briefly. It might have been better to omit two-third of them in order to treat more adequately the more important writers. As it is, one tends to tire of the continuous cataloging.

The author has expressed his own views in another volume. Here it is hard to discern precisely what they are. He is very keen in uncovering the weaknesses and inconsistencies of the destructive critics; he exposes their persistent misrepresentation of the Reformation view of the Bible, and treats the orthodox scholars with reasonable respect. Then, too, it is clear that he demands objectivity in revelation. The subjectivity of Schleiermacher, or Harnack, or Barth is repudiated. Christianity cannot be based on experience; there must be a verbal message from God.

But the author does not clearly state that this verbal message is entirely true. In the Introduction he contrasts the view of revelation as a body of divinely communicated truths with

the view that revelation existing *ab extra* is the wickedest of all follies. The impression left at the end of the book is that there must be some compromise between the extremes of objectivity and subjectivity.

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