

[1960. Review of *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, eds. *Christianity Today* 15 Feb.]

SCIENTIFIC BUT BIASED

The History of Religions, Essays in Methodology, by eight authors, edited by Eliade and Kitagawa (University of Chicago Press, 1959, 164 pp., \$5), is reviewed by Gordon H. Clark, Professor of Philosophy, Butler University.

Should the History of Religions be included in the university curriculum as a department independent of philosophy, sociology, psychology, and related subjects? To evaluate religions is certainly philosophy, not history. Further, evaluation and philosophy are not sufficiently objective and scientific, while the History of Religions out to be. On the other hand, some say that it is too objective because it looks on religion from the outside and therefore cannot understand its own material. All these objections the authors face, and they conclude that the universities should have such an independent department.

In desiring the particular details of the several world religions, the History of Religions does not give up the search for types of universals; but these are not to be located in a few clear moral principles nor in national common denominators. The subject should not endorse any one religion nor offer a universal synthetic religion. Neither should it examine a foreign religion as a commander of an invading army investigates enemy territory. The History of Religions is to be a science, a single science, and not a collective title for the History of Islam, the History of Hinduism, and so on. It is neither normative, nor solely descriptive, but lies somewhere in between. Just where the author unfortunately does not say.

This book suffers from a defect common to many books on religion. It does not state what religion is. The authors show a sympathetic attitude toward religions, especially non-Christian religions; but there is difficulty in identifying religion. This difficulty appears clearly in Smith's chapter on Comparative Religion. The gentleman is arguing that the representatives of various religions should gather in a friendly way to exchange ideas and understand each other. They should approach each other in humility and love. But there is one phenomenon (shall we call it a religion?) to which this lovely principle does not apply. That is fascism. The difference between fascism and religion is so axiomatic that the author cannot foresee any practical problem here. But only a few pages later he includes communism as a religion along

with Christianity and Hinduism. By what principle is fascism ruled out, evil as it was, and communism lovingly and humbly accepted, infinitely more evil as it is?

The UNESCO writers are not so unbiased as it might appear at the beginning. The book ends with a pleas for a universal religion based on the History of Religions, which has scientifically shown that the gloomy theories of Christianity does not correspond to the truth (p. 136).

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