

Bright, John, *The Authority of the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967. 272 pp. \$ 5.50.

The James A. Gray Lectures are held annually at the Divinity School of Duke University for the benefit of the Methodist pastors of North Carolina. It was the privilege of this reviewer to listen to the author when he delivered the substance of the present book in 1959. My recollection is that Bright impressed me with his integrity in defending the possibility of objective exegesis and the binding nature of biblical authority in the midst of an intellectual community which, even though geographically well within the Bible Belt, is not conservative in outlook. Bright built his case with what, at the time, seemed enough reasonableness to demand attention.

Reading *The Authority of the Old Testament* eight years later, this reviewer must confess disappointment with the almost naive superficiality of the first part of the book. Yet it says some things that probably needed to be said at the level in which they are stated. A word is necessary against Christian preaching that uses the OT in much the same way it uses anthologies of illustrations. Chapter 1 is designed to establish the nature of the problem, which is finally defined as consisting of establishing in what sense the OT is "authoritative for the Christian in matters of faith and practice" (p. 57). But Bright felt obliged to discuss the general question of religious authority and the more specific question of biblical authority before asking the question in terms of the OT. Thus, denying that the final authority over the Christian is a *book*, Bright makes clear that "the God of the Bible is the Christian's supreme authority in all senses of the word" (p. 31). Yet Bright wishes to insist that the book is "the final authority to be appealed to in all matters of belief and practice" (p. 23). This is the "historic Protestant tradition," and to step outside it is "dangerous in the extreme" (p. 38).

When it comes to the very significant role of the Church in the production and the canonization of the NT, Bright reacts to the Catholic recognition and use of this fact and thus overlooks much current scholarship, almost making the reader think that the author of the NT was the inspired apostle Paul. To say that "the New Testament was not produced by the Church corporately and anonymously" (p. 37) only serves to raise in the reader the question whether this is also true of the OT, and brings to mind some of the positive contributions of form-criticism. In order to maintain that "in establishing the canon the church did not create a new authority, but rather acknowledged and ratified an existing one" (p. 38), one needs better support than that provided by F. V. Filson's *Which Books Belong in the Bible?*.

Bright's foes are Marcionism, subjectivism, and moralizing. How to escape from the first is relatively clear, but one wonders whether, if the OT is to be used in the Christian pulpit, the possibility of avoiding the other two is real, especially if the use which the NT

writers made of the OT is to be taken seriously. Underlying Bright's plea for objectivity is a static view of authority. In his defense of the authoritative nature of those OT passages which cannot be used for moralizing, the argument seems to be: They are authoritative because they are there. And when Bright emphasizes that it is the theology which informs these passages that is authoritative, and then honestly asks whether this theology is not given better expression in the NT, he finds himself in a difficult position out of which he is able to maneuver only by the process of eschatologizing, a process which is both subjective and moralizing.

All in all, Bright has provided a good primer for pastors wishing to use the OT in preaching, but he has not significantly advanced us toward a solution to the problem of the authority of the OT.

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Bube, Richard H., ed., *The Encounter Between Christianity and Science*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1968. 318 pp. \$ 5.95.

This volume consists of a series of essays on the topic indicated by its title. It appears to be a book by Christians of evangelical stance. The editor, who is Professor of Materials Science and Electrical Engineering at Stanford University, is responsible for the first four chapters, which are introductory: "The Nature of Science," "The Nature of Christianity," "Natural Revelation," and "Biblical Revelation." He also is author of a later chapter dealing with "Physical Science." Other contributors are as follows: "Astronomy" by Owen Gingerich, "Geology" by F. Donald Eckelmann, "Biological Science" by Walter R. Hearn, "Psychology" by Stanley E. Lindquist, and "Social Science" by David O. Moberg. The various writers are specialists in the respective fields with which they deal. The treatment in each instance is necessarily brief, as imposed by the nature of the book itself: (1) coverage of some six different "sciences" (broadly defined) precludes much attention to any one area, and (2) the treatment given to each area is related to matters of concern to conservative or evangelical Christians. But in spite of such limitations, a good deal of ground in each field has nevertheless been covered and much useful information has been provided.

The Foreword to this book was prepared by A. van der Ziel, Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Minnesota. He states that the book "is an attempt by several scientists . . . to relate their scientific work to their Christian faith," and that the authors "show that their science and their faith do not battle against each other, but that they mutually enrich and complement each other. The harmony thus achieved is not attained by rejecting major parts of