

Noll, Mark A. *Between Faith and Criticism: Evangelicals, Scholarship, and the Bible in America*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986. xiv + 255 pp. \$19.95.

Between Faith and Criticism is the first of several volumes being sponsored by the Society of Biblical Literature in its Confessional Perspectives series. The purpose of the series is to examine the Bible within diverse American religious communities. While the present work deals with Bible scholarship among evangelicals, future volumes will examine Catholic, Jewish, and mainline Protestant Bible scholarship in America.

Mark A. Noll, a professor of history at Wheaton College, is becoming a major figure in the study of the role of the Bible and the development of biblical scholarship in American culture. His editorship of *The Bible in America* (1982) and *The Princeton Theology* (1983) are two of his contributions to a largely neglected field of study.

Between Faith and Criticism falls into three major sections: (1) an introduction that deals with definitions, themes, and theses; (2) chaps. 2-6, which are a historical treatment of the relationship of evangelicals to modern critical scholarship of the Bible; and (3) chaps. 7-9, which discuss problematic and unsettled issues in evangelicalism's approach to biblical scholarship.

Noll characterizes his book as "a historical essay on evangelical interaction with critical Bible scholarship in America" from 1880 to the present (p. 1). He writes for both evangelicals and non-evangelicals, claiming that his "essay" is not exhaustive, comprehensive, or entirely impartial. Despite that disclaimer, the reader will find *Between Faith and Criticism* to be the most comprehensive study of evangelical biblical scholarship available. While there is much more work to be done in this field, Noll's book certainly presents to its readers the main figures and developments in his field of study.

The book's focus is on the interaction of evangelicals with critical scholarship. That area is insightfully developed in the historical chapters.

The historical chapters (2-6) are undoubtedly the best in the book, and they are the part of the book that will have permanent value for students of biblical scholarship, evangelicalism, and American religion in general. It is in these chapters that the author has systematically developed topics that previously have been treated only in bits and pieces, if at all. More than just collecting the bits and pieces, however, Noll has synthesized his material and developed relationships that have not always been obvious.

The evangelical biblical scholar, Noll points out, has been forced into the dilemma of simultaneous membership in two hostile communities—"the professional community in which scholars willingly adopt a mien of intellectual neutrality, and the community of belief, in which the same scholars embrace a childlike faith" (p. 7). The problem, he points out, is

that evangelical biblical scholars live in both communities at the same time. The book's title, *Between Faith and Criticism*, reflects the tension involved in this dual citizenship. It is the often hostile interaction of those two communities that constitutes the context for the topic.

Noll indicates that the history of the evangelical scholars who experience the clash between those two communities is actually two quite diverse stories—an American version and the British story.

The book traces the American version as: (1) the response to the development of critical methodologies in the period from 1880-1900 (chap. 2). During this period, Noll sees the "traditional Bible-believers" as competing in the intellectual marketplace as equals in the academic dialogue regarding holy scripture. (2) The period of decline (1900-1935), during which conservatives retreated into the "fortress of faith" (chap. 3). (3) The evangelical return to the world of scholarship between 1935 and 1950 (chap. 5). (4) The discovery of strategies between 1940 and 1975 to put themselves back into the academic-professional picture (chap. 5). Chap. 6 completes the American version by surveying the status of evangelical scholarship since 1975, when it had once again become represented in the academic community.

The relationship of British evangelicals to critical study of the Bible from 1860-1937 is developed in chap. 4. In this very valuable treatment, Noll demonstrates that the less abrasive atmosphere between conservative and liberal scholars in Great Britain did not produce the unhealthy withdrawal from scholarship that was found in American fundamentalism with its escapist and name-calling approach to methods and ideas that threatened it. As a result, British evangelical biblical scholars were not excluded from the academic marketplace. Rather, they stayed, participated, and developed strategies that aided them in responsibly facing the questions being raised by critical methodologies. These strategies and models, Noll points out, were in place to give guidance to American conservatives as they came back into the academic world. Beyond that contribution, British biblical scholars—such as F. F. Bruce, G. T. Manley, and Norval Geldenhuys—became practical examples of the British approach to the tension between faith and criticism. The subsequent chapters of the book integrate the British contributions into the American development and demonstrate the continuing preponderance of British scholarship in some areas, such as the writing of conservative Bible commentaries.

Chaps. 7-9 discuss issues raised by the evangelical renaissance in biblical studies, along with some challenges that still need to be faced. The author leaves one with the distinct impression that even though American evangelical biblical scholars have come a remarkably long distance, they still have a way to go before achieving full maturity and full equality in the academic-scholarly marketplace.

Between Faith and Criticism is a major contribution to our understanding of the development of the American evangelical mind in general and the evolution of the relationship of evangelicals to critical methods of studying scripture in particular. Of special value are the historical chapters. Those chapters should be read by all who are interested in evangelicalism, American religion, or the role of critical methods in Bible study, even if they choose not to read the entire book. The scholarly world is indebted to Noll for this contribution and to the Society of Biblical Literature for its insight in sponsoring its series of studies on Confessional Perspectives.

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GEORGE R. KNIGHT

Perkins, Richard. *Looking Both Ways: Exploring the Interface Between Christianity and Sociology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987. 189 pp. Paperback, \$8.95.

To the extent that sociology is taken seriously in Christian circles, it is generally viewed in one of two ways: as a threat to faith or as an aid to greater understanding of religious commitments. These views roughly correspond with conservative or liberal orientations, and with rejection or acceptance of sociological insights. Most often, however, sociological methodology is used without regard to the discipline's philosophical underpinnings—an unsatisfying solution to the sociologist, as well as to the thinking Christian, but one that is perceived to be safer than other alternatives.

In *Looking Both Ways*, Richard Perkins takes the bull by the horns and examines the foundations of sociology and Christianity as belief systems that do not naturally mix. The result is a profound yet readable book that offers as much to the sociologist as to the committed Christian, but most to those who try to integrate the two viewpoints. In his analysis, the author sacrifices neither faith nor scientific integrity—in itself a respectable achievement. By getting to the roots of both sociology and Christianity (a “radical” approach), he finds a meeting ground that appears to be mutually satisfying to all who accept the premise that several perspectives are better than one.

Comprised of two parts, the first on the problem of relativity and the second on the problem of ideology, the book focuses on the central questions that confront Christians as they grapple with the insights that sociology can offer. Perkins defines a Christian as one who subscribes to the core tenets of the Christian gospel, including creation, fall, and restoration through the sacrificial death of Christ. Thus, the analysis transcends denominational boundaries. Sociology is seen as representing two contradicting claims: that social reality is a human construction and that humans