

[1966. Review of *Revolt Against Heaven*, by Kenneth Hamilton. *The Gordon Review* (Spring)]

Revolt Against Heaven, by Kenneth Hamilton. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1965. 193 pp. \$2.45 (Paper).

Written in fine literary style, not devoid of humor, and characterized by penetrating analyses, this excellent study aims and succeeds in showing the basic influence of Schleiermacher on many modern theologians, some of whom do not recognize their inspiration. Along the line the author makes telling criticisms of the men he discusses. For example, demythologization is needed only if the “modern world view” is complete and correct. But “why should not the Christian faith contribute to our vision of what is meaningful? Such questions Bultmann never asks. . . . Heidegger has to speak first so that God may be heard subsequently?” (pp. 17-18). Others who oppose Bultmann’s existentialism do not agree what view is “modern” and hence have no consensus on what is meaningful. “The two outlooks, equally, call upon faith to justify itself by standards set up by the *Zeitgeist* demands” (p. 23). The author also entertains the reader by bringing into focus the confusions in *Honest to God* (pp. 27-54) along with Bishop Robinson’s complete misunderstanding of Bonhoeffer (p. 171).

The volume, nevertheless, lends itself to some technical criticisms. There seems to be some oversimplifications of “Greek Philosophy,” and a distortion of Augustine may be taken to imply the total destruction by sin of the divine image of God in man. Also, without detracting from the author’s clear exposition of Schleiermacher, the reviewer thinks his Kantian background has been slight – no mention of Jacobi – and Greek influence overestimated. Furthermore the amount of Kant, given in connection with Ritschl, is debatable because the author does not seem to realize that for Kant God is a heuristic principle, regulative but not constitutive.

Coming to contemporaries Professor Hamilton exposes the naïve superficiality of Henry P. Van Dusen (pp. 91 ff.), and speaking of neo-liberalism in general says, “At the center of its understanding of redemption is not forgiveness of sins, but the actualizing of human potential” (p. 109). The discussion of D.C. Macintosh, Wieman, John Dewey, James, Mathew Arnold, and R.B. Braithwaite is good, but too short. The book as a whole is too short. Such excellent writing should also have been extended to the cover the God-is-dead movement.

The final chapter, *A Voice Affirming Heaven*, is a sympathetic, perhaps over-sympathetic, account of Bonhoeffer. At any rate, it sets up the contrast between the revolt against heaven and super-natural revelation.

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