Unrest In Synod

ANYONE who has not lived his recent Synodical life in a trunk is aware of the current unrest in Synod regarding inspiration, revelation, and the doctrine of the Word generally.

There are those who, by implication at least, raise the King James Version to a position of esteem which is untenable. Others desire to ignore the problem of canon and the historically Lutheran distinction between antilegomena and homolegomena. Some espouse a doctrine of revelation which is identical with that taught in a doctrinal formulation of another decade which claimed that the Scriptures contain the Word of God. Other views expressed are patently neo-orthodox and would ultimately denude the Scriptures of the miraculous. Luther, who never developed a locus on the Scriptures, is quoted as a champion by any and all who would write or speak on the subject.

The seriousness of this unrest—we hesitate to use the word controversy—must not be minimized. The foundation of the Christian faith is involved. The basis for authority in faith and life is at stake.

In our opinion, a part of the difficulty arises from the fact that we are living on “borrowed theological capital” in the Missouri Synod. To paraphrase Goethe, we have never really apprehended the theological heritage of our fathers.

A number of ameliorating suggestions have been made by those who recognize that the present unrest is real and not apparent.

We would suggest that our smaller pastoral conferences eschew for a time the discussions of “practical” subjects and the hearing of reports from officialdom. We would further suggest that this conference time be given to a thorough study of the doctrine of the Word and that this study be so designed that the intelligent participation of all the brethren in the conference be secured. We would also caution against the use of “canned materials” as a basis for this proposed study. Guidelines prepared by joint-faculty committees are not the solution. Only intensive study by the brethren themselves will enable them to heed the counsel:

“Was du ererb von deinen Vaetern hast, Erwib es um es zu besitzen”

G. J. B.

Marty, Associate Editor of the Christian Century and pastor of a Missouri Synod congregation in suburban Chicago, has written an incisive analysis of American religion. With Will Herberg, Marty recognizes that the prevailing religion in America is neither Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Jewish; rather, it is a "sentimental religious syncretism . . . a temporalization of religion in the democratic structures."

The author—as have many others—points to the spurious character of the alleged religious revival in America; he chides the professional fund raisers, activism in American churches, ecclesiastical bureaucracy in the local parish as well as on the national level, and meaningless ritualism. (Largely Southern Baptist in our views on liturgy, we read with intense pleasure the following sentence: "It is ironical that dilettante forms of the liturgical movement in Protestantism, concerned with beautifying or enriching worship, are borrowing the externals and overlays of Roman Catholic elements that are now being shed by the more informed and historically conscious liturgiologists.") (P. 145)

The author's chapter on The Practice of the Parish will evoke the interest of the average pastor. Here Marty discusses the "remnant" concept which he admits is not original with him.

"So the remnant is not something one joins, or that one's minister points to. . . . The Remnant is rather a goal. It is a becoming instead of a being in the Christian community. It is a hypothesis, a remembered rubric from Biblical times, reborn for a new day. It is a principle for supporting the essential tasks of the Church and of Christian worship. It is never this or that permanently identifiable group of people.

"Yet one must begin where one is. Parochial leaders must begin by developing the sense of the 'difference' among those who show signs of deeper commitment. Their energies will go into enlargement of this core, not so much through multitudinism as through minimum contact with the maximum number of people." (P. 142)

We have long felt that American organized Christianity is primarily a gemuettich social organization and only secondarily a religious fellowship. Dr. Marty's book tends to confirm this opinion.

George J. Beto


The late John Fritz used to urge his students to preach sermons which were zeit-gemaess. Thielicke's sermons are timely in the finest sense of the word. He relates the Christian Gospel to life.

Originally published in German under the title Das Bilderbuch Gottes. Reden weber die Gleichnisse Jesu, this book presents discourses on sixteen of the parables of our Lord. While Thielicke's explicit statement of the tertium comparationis may not always be put in the traditional form, he impresses indelibly upon the minds of his readers the lesson which our Lord intended to teach in each parable. Even those who insist that a detailed statement of the atonement appear in every sermon—whether the text warrants it or not—will find that Thielicke usually conforms to this human canon.

Brethren of ours who visited Germany testify that great crowds listen to this Hamburg preacher. We can understand his popularity. His is life-related preaching at its best.

Buy this book. It will edify you personally; if you digest it, it will improve your preaching.

George J. Beto


Of the five hundred plus volumes on art published in 1959 (Cf. Time, Dec. 21, 1959, p. 40) this one might easily be the most militantly anti-Scriptural. The author, who is described as an Anglican priest, stands foursquare on the foundation of Darwin, Freud, Einstein, and Jung. He is trying to find new meanings in the ancient symbols for people who no longer believe the cardinal doctrines. The symbolism of Genesis 1-4 is the major subject of the book, a "post-critical" discussion of the "Tree of Know-How," the serpent, the sexual awakening, the virgin-mother-consort motif, the two-brother motif, etc. The approach is that of the psychologist and philosopher. This is not a book which explains the meaning of Christian symbols.

A quotation will amply show the character of this book:

"Using the principles of interpretation derived from psychological practice, it has been suggested, for instance, that (by the principle of reversal) Eve is really the Mother of Adam and that we are confronted with a Mother-incest situation and that the fundamental 'sin' is of this character and the guilt is associated with the murder
of the Father by the primeval Sons. . . . In this interpretation the Tree is identified with the Father-God and, hence, eating (the fruit of) the tree becomes the cannibalistic meal ‘enjoyed’ by the Sons of their murdered Father whose ‘trunk’ they consume. Certainly, the notion of ‘eating the god’ to attain his mana is common enough in religions and undertones of this nature are not entirely absent from eucharistic worship.” (p. 128)

This is blasphemy which deserves no recommendation. However, theological students, who are not as yet acquainted with the depths to which a liberated theology can descend, might read with profit how an author, who can find no defense for religion, except that “the energies of the unconscious need to be released”, argues for the preservation of the shell of the church after the substance is gone.

Otto F. Stahlike


This book, which was originally Dr. Torrance’s doctoral dissertation at Basel, is a fine contribution to an important and too little known subject. The book is a study of the doctrine of grace and the related doctrines of the way of salvation as taught in the Apostolic Fathers, the Didache, the Epistles of Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas. Dr. Torrance studies his sources theologically and linguistically, seeking to show how and why the early Church so soon departed from the New Testament teachings on these all-important subjects.

Perhaps the most valuable section of the book is the 35-page introduction in which the author studies the Greek term charis and related terms in Classical and Hellenistic Greek, and in Philo, as well as the Hebrew terms translated by charis in the Septuagint, and concludes with a study of the terms in the Gospels, Paul, and the remaining books of the New Testament. This portion is well worth the price of the book, giving the reader an excellent example of the type of word study which would be most useful in our sermons, conference papers, and classroom lectures.

In the opinion of this reviewer, the remainder of the book, dealing with the doctrine of grace in the Apostolic Fathers, while constituting the main part, fails to reach the level of the introduction. Perhaps this is due to the inferior nature of the author’s material. At least, one concludes the study with the conviction that the level of the New Testament canonical books is infinitely far above that of the Apostolic Fathers, some of which for a time were regarded as canonical.

Dr. Torrance reveals himself as a firm believer in the principle of sola gratia. His Scottish Calvinism projects itself at times, but it is a pleasure to read a book in which the author combines a scholarly attitude with a theological conviction which he is not ashamed to confess. One gets the feeling that he is trying to be not only scholarly, but also to convey the great message of salvation by grace alone. We recommend this book to our readers both as an instruction in scholarly method and for spiritual refreshment. We need more such books.

J. A. O. Preus


We take it that the author needs no introduction. He is writing in the interest of the Ecumenical Movement. While he realizes that the unity of the church on an ecumenical basis is hardly possible, he declares that he is “optimistic about realizing Christian solidarity.” (p. 26). This, he says, is already expressed in the prayers and theological discussions of those who are baptized Christians. He pleads for New Testament orientation of his point that our separation represents an offense. He recalls what the New Testament says about unity and division among Christians. And he comes then to his proposal, which is the burden of this monograph, that both Catholics and Protestants go beyond prayer and theological discussion in solidifying those who call on the name of Christ. And what, specifically, does he suggest? A yearly offering by both sides for one another; by the Protestants for needy Catholics and by the Catholics for needy Protestants. The ramifications of the scheme, the author’s answers to objections, and the plea for an unbiased consideration of the proposal represent the summary content of the four short chapters.

C. W. Spiegel


The author, at present minister of Lothian Road Church in Edinburgh, is active in the Church of Scotland. Another book from his pen is Calvin’s Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament.

A student of Calvin soon becomes aware of the grasp of Calvin’s thought possessed by this faithful interpreter of the great French reformation. The secret of this lies, no doubt, in the wide range of reading and study throughout the writings of Calvin. The author makes much of the point that the study of a subject such as the Christian life according to Calvin necessitates that kind of effort on the part of a student. He, therefore, who has access to Calvin’s sermons and commentaries as well as to his Institutes, can do no

Prof. Munck of Aarhus University, Denmark, has produced a work which will gain high respect for its scholarship, its willingness to break with traditional explanations, and the novelty of many of its concepts. It is a provocative book which raises more questions than it answers. With many of Prof Munck's conclusions this reviewer finds himself in substantial agreement, and with others the reviewer is at least mystified, if not dissatisfied.

Munck is of the opinion that, while the theories of F. C. Baur as to a controversy between Paul and the Jerusalem Church have been largely demolished by Harnack (and we might add also by Ramsey), too many of Baur's premises are still current and normative in the Church of today. He undertakes, consequently, to set forth several theses of his own, in opposition to Baur, some of which are very sound and some of which are subject to considerable question. Munck's account of Paul's conversion, rejecting as it does all psychological explanations and all attempts to make it a purely human event, is excellent. In his discussion of Paul as the Apostle, his demonstration of a parallel between the call of an Old Testament prophet and an Apostle is intriguing. The author makes the rather startling claim, in a most convincing way, that the Judaizers of Galatians were not Jews but Gentile converts; that the congregation at Corinth was not rent by factions and valid conclusions regarding its basic meaning. Trapp's commentary gives little evidence of such thorough exegetical procedure. (Perhaps this criticism applies to all one-volume commentaries on the New Testament.)

This is an odd book. There is so much to stimulate thought, so much which represents fresh and exciting insights into the early history of the Church, yet so many things which disappoint. One who calls himself a believer in Sola Scriptura will certainly be disappointed in Munck's attitude toward Scripture. He has no trouble in stating that Acts and the Synoptic Gospels contradict Paul's Epistles, and since the latter are normative, the former must be wrong, p. 249. He seems to adopt many of the conclusions of form criticism. Likewise, many of his isagogical ideas are far from satisfactory. Further, he has certain theological notions which are mystifying, to say the least. For example, he suggests that the conversion of the Gentiles is only a representative thing, that as long as some members of each nation have come to faith, that nation has been evangelized. When this type of representative mission work has been completed among the Gentiles, then the conversion of Israel will occur. Munck suggests that the reason for the large Gentile delegation accompanying Paul on his trip to Jerusalem with the collection for the saints, Acts 20, was to provoke the Jews to jealousy so that they might thus be converted en masse. Of course, the net result of the whole thing is failure. Paul did not lay the foundations for an on-going world-wide mission program for 19 centuries of the Church, but rather failed in that he did not provoke the Jews into accepting Christ.

The book is interesting, but will probably evoke more disagreement than acceptance. Prof. Munck must be an interesting person, for he does not hesitate to expound some most novel views.

J. A. O. Preus


This work is a phrase by phrase commentary on the entire New Testament; from the point of view of proportion it is chiefly a commentary on the Gospels, especially Matthew's Gospel. It is throughout a vivid and colorful representation of the text, rarely weighing itself down with discussion of difficulties or problems encountered in properly dissecting a text. One can hardly criticize the vitality of such an approach, but the serious exegete must find more than well-turned phrases and interesting applications in his commentaries. He must find sound investigation of the content of the text and valid conclusions regarding its basic meaning. Trapp's commentary gives little evidence of such thorough exegetical procedure. (Perhaps this criticism applies to all one-volume commentaries on the New Testament.)

The author adopts the text of the King James Version as the basis for his comment, although the frequent use of Greek and Hebrew words and phrases shows that he was well acquainted with the original languages of the Scriptures. His method is to restate the truth of any passage or the meaning of any event as these might be applicable to situations met by the theologian and preacher. Furthermore, Trapp uses his remarkable knowledge of the history of the church and of the classical literature of Greece
In the theological development of the intertestamental period, one assumes fulfillment who read it in the light of its "We...the written Word of God which came to them (John 10,35). In assessing interpretation of, e.g., the Servant of Jahweh; or should we say "messianic" interpretation is to be given to the history of God's Chosen People and to interpretation. Nevertheless, the author comes out clearly for a Messianic viewpoint in works...books dealing with this period and its Old Testament background that it is refreshing beyond words to read a scholarly treatment of the material which assumes that the Old Testament Scriptures are reliable. This reviewer...Rev. Kirkpatrick, 1886-1890. The review of this book in Christianity Today (Vol. IV, No. 8, p. 37) by E. J. Young is headed "Mildly Liberal". The term "mildly" is used comparatively in view of the type of philosophy which pervades the eleven chapters of the book. The volume presents not only valuable information on such problems as the language, customs, heathen religions, the missionary's home; it also defines attitudes requisite in a missionary toward the people, the government, the national Christians, his fellow missionaries, and his home constituency. While the book is designed especially for the foreign missionary, it might well be read with profit by all who have a desire to bring the Gospel to those for whom Christ died.

Arthur E. Graf


It was a pleasure to read this book. The reason: the author's viewpoint. It has become so accustomed to the historical-critical viewpoint in world dealing with this period and its Old Testament background that it is refreshing beyond words to read a scholarly treatment of the material which assumes that the Old Testament Scriptures are reliable. This reviewer readily admits that an authentic Daniel and the reliability of Esther and Chronicles II, e.g., are not indispensable assumptions for a discussion of the secular history of this period. They are essential, however, if the proper interpretation is to be given to the history of God's Chosen People and to the written Word of God which came to them (John 10,35). In assessing the theological development of the Intertestamental period, one assumes either the integrity of God's revelation to His people prior to the last of the prophets, Malachi, with theological deviations arising thereafter, or an evolution of theological thought in which most of the prophetic utterances of the canonical prophets are pried out of their God-given context and shoved among the pseudepigrapha of the second century B. C. When Christ and the New Testament writers quote such prophecies from "canonical pseudepigrapha" as authentic, the interpreter is forced to a kenosis or "emptying" of Christ which is contrary to that which the New Testament claims for Christ. But, then, the New Testament is not supposed to be inerrant either, according to "scientific" a priori.

If only more Christian scholars would realize that the supposed scientific critical conclusions on Old Testament books are based primarily upon the a priori that God could not and did not reveal His will to man in Scriptures which he guarded from error! Realize that this major premise is invalid, and one sees that the conclusions based on it are subjective and speculative. It is a sad commentary on both scholarship and faith within circles that hold to the inerrancy of God's Word if scholars and teachers accept conclusions as scientific and sacrosanct even though their major premise is not the a priori given above.

The author of this book writes in a non-technical style, using very few footnotes. This should not deceive the reader as to the scholarly character of the work nor the credentials of the author, whose doctoral studies were made at Dropsie College and who is assistant professor of Old Testament at Gordon Divinity School. The student who wishes to dig deeper is directed to abundant source material. But he will do well to retain the viewpoint of the author on the reliability of Scripture. He dare do no less.

Elmer J. Moeller


This is a reprint of the 1897 second edition of the Warburton Lectures delivered by Kirkpatrick, 1886-1890. The review of this book in Christianity Today (Vol. IV, No. 8, p. 37) by E. J. Young is headed "Mildly Liberal". The term "mildly" is used comparatively in view of the type of books published on similar subjects in the half century after the lectures. The book is useful as an introduction to the prophets since it discusses the person, the style, the problems, the date and content of each prophet interestingly. The theology of the prophets is presented in a way that leaves no doubt that the dominant (at that time) critical theories have influenced the interpretation. Nevertheless, the author comes out clearly for a Messianic interpretation of, e.g., the Servant of Jahweh; or should we say "messianic" when we read on the one hand: "We who read it in the light of its fulfillment cannot doubt that it was intended by the Holy Spirit to point forward
to Christ," and on the other hand the author fits his statements into a Sitz im Leben frame by saying about the prophecies concerning Christ in Isaiah: "For once more be it observed that this whole exposition of the calling and the work and the victory of the Servant of the Lord was a truth for the time." The Isaiah of chapters 40-66 is to Kirkpatrick not the same Isaiah of the first part of the book. As Young correctly points out, even the discoveries of the Qumran scroll of Isaiah would probably not have convinced Kirkpatrick of the full unity of Isaiah. To speak of the "progress of revelation" (page ix) is perfectly legitimate, but becomes suspect when the evolution of the theology of the prophets seems indicated.

For one who is interested in the study of the Old Testament prophets this book will be of value, particularly if one is able to discriminate between the scholarly use of evidences and the rationalistic use of critical theories.

Martin J. Naumann


A Connecticut Congregational clergyman with a Ph.D. from Boston University interprets in this book the message of Israel's eighth and seventh century prophets in the setting of their times—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and the supposedly late writer of Deuteronomy.

Dr. Milley offers his readers valuable insights into the lives and teachings of these prophets; however, against the background of his thesis of monotheism's evolution in Israel, partly through these prophets. According to this view Israel's religion developed from polytheism (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, kings David and Solomon) through henotheism (the belief that one god above all others is important for you: so Israel until the eighth century prophets) to a pure monotheism, completely realized first in Second Isaiah. The eighth and seventh century prophets contributed mightily in this development: Amos, e.g., was the first to express the conviction that Yahweh had jurisdiction beyond Israel and thus provide roots for a universal religion (p. 36). Jeremiah's contribution was the introduction of individuality into the Yahweh cult (pp. 92-3). Deuteronomy, an alleged seventh century document with nationalism and purification of the Yahweh cult as its key notes, is conceived as an attempt to reconcile the prophetic and priestly emphases in Israel, and is regarded as without monotheistic theology except for chap. four, considered post-exilic. The culmination of Israel's theological development is seen in Second Isaiah, chapters 40-55, supposedly written in Babylon between 586 and 536 B. C. by an unknown prophet. Here, and here for the first time, pure monotheism was expounded: "I am the first, I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Is. 44:6). This pure monotheism then became the basis of the three great Western religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Here we see Israel's most significant achievements; she led the world to think of God in her own terms (p. 1).
nition of Chemosh, god of the Ammonites..." The author here quoted the statement of Jephthah: "Will you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess?" This argumentum ad hominem used by Jephthah is cited to prove that Jephthah recognized Chemosh as a real god, a rival to Jephthah's own national god.

Another example of the way in which Biblical history is treated, even in minor items, appears in connection with the statement about Abishag the Shunamite: "She bore him no children." The Bible tells why not, but the author of this book thinks that this girl was given to David to test his fertility because: "Some religions of the ancient Orient required fertility of the king and queen to insure fertility of the fields." For these and other insights the author thanks his teachers. The reviewer still believes that there is one great Teacher who leads us into all truth, also into the Old Testament truths.

Martin J. Naumann

BOOKS RECEIVED

(Acknowledgment of a book does not preclude a review in a subsequent issue.)


Luther and the Scriptures

By

Dr. M. Reu