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Book Reviews

THE ENGLISH BIBLE: A HISTORY OF TRANSLATIONS FROM EARLIEST ENGLISH VERSIONS TO THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE. By F. F. Bruce. Oxford University Press, New York, 1961. 234 pages. Cloth. \$3.75.

This new and scholarly history of the English Bible was published in the British simultaneously with *The New English Bible*, as a companion volume—and it is just that. Like the NEB itself, it is as refreshingly accurate as the subject can be made. The author, Dr. F. F. Bruce, Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism at Manchester, has the respect of the Protestant world for his knowledge of biblical lore.

Aside from its scholarliness, its interesting and lucid style, the value of the volume lies in Bruce's research which has produced the complete, up-to-date, and authoritative history of the English Bible contains new material on old topics and entirely new material of which people have heard. The story of Tyndale is told as never before. How many readers have heard of Cheke's "pure English" version of 1550, or "Bishop Beke's Bible" of 1551? The influence of Luther is given its proper place in the translation of the English Scriptures.

The author has also included sample paragraphs from old unfamiliar versions tucked away in libraries in far-away places. Interesting anecdotes grace the pages. Modern translators no doubt covet the way the Great Bible "caught on" in England, despite the king's special proclamation of 1534 which forbade the reading of the English Bible aloud in church during divine service. Dr. Bruce comments: "Evidently even while divine service was going on, there were many people who found it much more interesting and possibly more edifying as well, to listen to the Bible being read by one of their literate fellow-parishioners than to listen to what the parson was saying." (P. 69)

Dr. Bruce's observations and judgments on translating the Scriptures are worth pondering. He speaks of a basic principle which he calls "law of equivalent effect," that is, the translation should have the same effect on modern readers as the original texts had on the first readers. He says that the history of the English Bible reveals that a version must be the Bible of both the church and the people to gain ascendancy. Furthermore, the story of the Bible tells us that people have generally made the mistake of objecting to translators rather than their translations. Translators, he maintains, should be competent people who themselves hear the voice of God speaking to them in Holy Scripture. They should also translate whole sentences rather than the words. He believes the Authorized Version is better than all former versions, and most versions since, exclusive of the Revised Standard and NEB. His final chapters on Catholic Versions, the Revised Standard Version, and the New English Bible are outstanding.

We have only praise for this timely volume. From it one learns much about his precious Bible and becomes extremely grateful for the Open Bible and all versions. We are especially thankful that Dr. Bruce was commissioned to write it.

Lorman M. Petersen

RELIGION IN AMERICAN SOCIETY. Richard Lambert, Editor. The Annals Of The American Academy Of Political And Social Science. Volume 332, November, 1960. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

We are not sanguine enough to believe it will happen, but here is a booklet every clergyman and literate layman should read.

Fourteen authors—and most of them competent—objectively analyze religion in American society. Representative chapter headings are “Trends in Church Membership in the United States,” “Theology And Present Day Revival,” “Church And Laity Among Protestants,” “Financing The Local Church,” “Religion and Politics,” and “Religion and Education.”

One of the best chapters, “Sects and Cults,” is from the pen of Missouri’s *Wunderkind*, Marty Marty. The weakest chapter, in our opinion, is “The Ecumenical Movement.” We say this not because of our traditional Lutheran bias against The Ecumenical Movement; the chapter simply lacks the profound insights found in the other presentations.

A couple of quotes caught our eye:

“The organizational chart of one relatively minor sub-agency of the Missouri Synod Lutherans—the Lutheran Layman’s League—resembles closely the bureaucratic plan of Standard Oil of New Jersey.” (P. 42)

“. . . The church appears to many of its members to reach them only in financial drives. This impression is deepened by the increasing use of the professional fund-raiser whose techniques have a depressing sameness, whether he is speaking in the name of an American Legion post, a church, or a political party.” (Page 150)

“. . . During a period when 200,000 people were moving into New York City in the area below Fourteenth Street, seventeen Protestant churches moved out.” (P. 86)

“. . . The denominational system which characterizes religious affairs in America is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the actualities of our society and culture.” (P. 87)

We were depressed after reading this book. It tended to confirm our opinion that in this world the real future of The Faith lies in a return to the catacombs.

If your local library doesn't have the book, order it from the A at 3937 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

G. J. B

THE SPIRIT OF PROTESTANTISM. By Robert McAfee Brown
ford University Press, New York, 1961. 264 pages.
\$4.50.

Brown, a Union Theological Seminary professor, asserts in the *Foreword* that his book was written for perplexed Protestants, wistful pagans, confused Roman Catholics, inquiring college students, and beleaguered Protestant ministers. Undoubtedly 99.44 per cent of the readers of this journal fall into the last category.

You should read this book. You won't agree with the author (and I don't think you should) when he talks about the authority of Scripture. His remarks on the doctrine of election, the ecumenical movement, and the sacraments are equally weak. The chapters, however, on the Priesthood of Believers, The Calling of the Christian Man, Loving with The Mind, Creative Use of Doubt, The Worship of God, and Worldliness will stimulate your thinking and frequently evoke your concurrence. The book's conclusion, entitled *Preface: a "Pilgrim People" magnificent piece of writing.*

A few quotes will indicate the quality and character of the book as well as the biases of the reviewer:

"Protestants should remember two things about expository preaching. First, there is no guarantee that a sermon based on Scripture will 'speak' to them. Such are the weaknesses of flesh and mind that expository sermons can be deadly dull. But such is the humility of God that he relies upon weak flesh and weak minds to expound and hear his Word, and bears the indignities worked upon the Word with exceptionally patient grace. For when Scripture is laid open, the Word of God has at least a fighting chance to be heard amid the words of men. Second, comfortable American Protestants need to remember that churches under tribulation return to expository preaching. The Bible is recognized as the only adequate vehicle of faith, and it speaks with power." (P. 140)

"If he (the pastor) belongs to a certain school of thought, he may pray *ex tempore* hoping that the Holy Spirit will supply him with the proper words. This hope is not always fulfilled." (P. 136)

"The Gothic 'split chancel,' for instance, was appropriate for medieval monks who chanted their offices antiphonally: it is perhaps the most inappropriate arrangement possible for a Protestant choir. Likewise, the arrangement of a long nave with an altar at the far east end is scarcely conducive to the expression of a liturgy conceived in terms of the people of God gathered around the Table of

the Lord. It is sometimes forgotten that Gothic itself was once 'contemporary' and strange. Its advantage over Norman architecture was not so much its greater inherent beauty as the very functional consideration that it permitted more light to enter the sanctuary than had been possible before. If light is a criterion for church building today, there are newer and better ways of achieving it than Gothic. (One church journal recently printed on adjoining pages a picture of an ornate Baptist Gothic church and a picture of a modern glass skyscraper in New York built by a soap manufacturing company. The caption beneath the two pictures ran: 'Cleanliness is better than Godliness.')" (P. 195)

"For American Protestantism today could almost be described an amalgam of (a) the insights of Thomas Jefferson, (b) belief in 'truth, beauty, and goodness,' (c) the 'American way of life' (d) positive thinking, and, sometimes, (e) a slight dash of internationalism and the Golden Rule." (P. 188)

Brown is an interesting writer. Unlike so many books in the area of religion, there is a minimum of "hot air with a halo" in the work. Your mind will be improved and your spirit edified by the reading of this book.

G. J. B.

A THEOLOGY OF PROCLAMATION. By Dietrich Ritschl. John Knox Press, Richmond, 1960. 190 pages. Cloth. \$3.50.

In this volume the Austin Presbyterian Seminary professor reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the neo-orthodox stance in theology.

Following Karl Barth, he contends that the Word of God presents itself in three forms: 1) the proclaimed Word, 2) the written Word, and 3) the revealed Word (P. 79). Asserting that the proclaimed Word must be based upon and grow out of the written Word, the author makes a good and bold plea for expository preaching. The rediscovery of exegesis is the preacher's primary task:

It goes without saying that the preacher, in order to be able to preach . . . , must be a solid exegete and must not be afraid of hard work for the preparation of his sermon. He must have a sincere respect for the Biblical Word and a deep trust that the Word will accomplish what it promises. He must learn the discipline of a ministry with daily contact with the Bible and with a high regard for the theological work of exegesis, for which he was trained. He must also know the thoughts, interests, and forms of expression of his congregation, so that he is constantly driven back to the Biblical Word and from there back again to his congregation. (Pp. 140-1).

Again, Ritschl asserts that the sermon is not simply something said, but something being done. Through the proclaimed Word, based on the written Word, God reveals Jesus Christ to men through the Holy Spirit. The promise that God will make history through the proclaimed Word, Ritschl calls "the first ground rule of homiletics." (P. 181).

For all its positive emphasis, the book reveals faults common to the orthodox position: the identification of the Word ultimately with the Holy Spirit (P. 21); the view that the Bible is not revelation but the witness to the revelation of God in Christ (P. 28) ". . . in all its humanity and with its contradictions" (P. 159); ". . . even the content of God's Word is constant yesterday, today, and tomorrow. For this reason it is impossible to speak of 'Christian principles,' i.e., 'timeless truths'." (P. 48).

Finally, Ritschl falls victim to over-stating his case, as, for example, when he says that the content of the sermon is what matters; for technique will grow out of content (P. 8). Again, he asserts that the Holy Spirit is located between the preacher and the pew rather than in the heart of the preacher (P. 129). When he says that the sermon is totally determined by the text, we applaud; when, however, he rejects the idea of determining a theme for the sermon, we wonder. Arguing that each section of the sermon is explication and application, Ritschl is no friend of the traditional view that it is the preacher's task to apply the text to the hearer, seeking to persuade them to do what the text suggests they should do.

If you are looking for a book that gives you a view of the sermon through the eyes of Karl Barth's eyes, and Ritschl's too, this is the book to read.

Henry J. Eggold, Jr.

THE PASTOR'S PRAYER BOOK. By Robert Rodenmayer. Oxford, New York, 1960. 319 pages. Cloth. \$5.00.

CONTEMPORARY PASTORAL PRAYERS FOR THE CHRISTIAN YOUTH. By Nathaniel M. Guptill, Christian Education Press, Philadelphia, 1960. 151 pages. Cloth. \$2.50.

The book by Rodenmayer is a compilation "of the best of the ages." The prayers in Guptill's book are the product of his own pen.

We would encourage our pastors to purchase the Rodenmayer book. While they patently cannot use all of the 641 prayers presented (e.g., Prayer for the Departed Soul, A Prayer for a Suicide), our pastors will be confident—find the book valuable in their public and private ministries.

G. J. B.

SELECTIONS FROM EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS. By Henry Melville Gwatkin. Fleming H. Revell Company, Westwood, N. J., 1961. 196 pages. Cloth. \$3.00.

This book is a reprint of the famous 1893 edition of Gwatkin's classic. Covering selections of patristic literature from the close of the first century to the period of Constantine, Gwatkin's book will find a useful place on every pastor's bookshelf. Particularly valuable is the fact that the original Greek or Latin appears on facing pages, thus giving the scholar a chance to see what actually was said and the would-be scholar the opportunity to read the material. The book follows a chronological order, which has almost as many advantages as disadvantages. Fortunately, there is a topic index appended to the book, which helps. The quotations are well chosen and cover a number of very interesting subjects, ranging from early persecutions through the Canon of the New Testament to various heresies and doctrinal questions. It is always valuable to renew acquaintance (if one ever had it) with Eusebius, Origen, Tertullian, the Clements, Cyprian, and other worthies of the pre-Nicene period. Buy the book and spend some pleasant hours with a *pot pourri* of ancient church history and thought.

J. A. O. Preus

LUTHER AND THE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 1483-1960. By Altman K. Swihart. Philosophical Library, New York, 1960. 703 pages. Cloth. \$7.50.

The author, professor of religion at Carthage College (ULCA), says at the close of the book that he has sought "to put on a large screen the history of Lutheranism (P. 660). This is no small task to undertake in a single volume. However, we are inclined to agree with the words of the publisher that this book gives "not only an exposition of the teachings of Martin Luther as derived from his writings, but is followed by a history of the development of the Lutheran Church in Europe and America to the present day, including church polity and liturgy. The remainder of the volume deals with modern trends in the Church, such as rethinking of Church-State relations, private confession, Swedish theology, centralization of authority, impending mergers, and Lutheran participation in the Ecumenical movement."

There is a wealth of material interestingly presented and a liberal use of quotations from sources which lend flavor. But the reading is marred by a surprising number of typographical errors throughout. Examples: frequent omission of paragraph indentation; misplaced lines of type (pages 401-402); misspellings, "humns" for hymns (P. 183), "Stephen" for Stephan (Pp.

396ff.). The author of *Zion On The Mississippi* is variously identified as Forster, Walter O., Walter A., and Walter C.

Of particular interest to us is the author's treatment of the Synod. Granting some virtues and pointing out some admitted faults, emphasis seems to fall on conservative Missouri's "intolerance," which, however, he notes is beginning to soften. By contrast, the rationalism and liberalism of men like Fred. H. Quitman and S. S. Schumucker escape scant, if any, censure. You will also blink at the bald statement that during the Civil War Dr. Walther advised a Cleveland pastor "it was the duty of all Lutherans in the Northern Army, to kill their fellow Lutherans in the South" (P. 407). Dr. Ludwig E. Fuerbringer, *80 Eventful Years*, is cited as the source for this morsel of "Missouriana." We doubt the venerable Doctor would have approved it in the form given.

This Missouri reviewer, however, is not so "intolerant" as to permit the and other shortcomings of the volume to obscure its merits. It can be a most useful survey if read with care.

Erich H. Heintzen

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN, AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY. By R. V. G. Tasker. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1960. 237 pages. \$3.00.

This commentary is the fourth volume in the new Tyndale Study Bible Commentaries published by Eerdmans. Several volumes have already appeared.

The Tyndale Series is defined as a "concise, workable tool for lay teachers and ministers," and in this capacity the volume presents a valuable contribution. It is brief and to the point, avoiding many abstruse problems by the use of the Hebrew and Greek alphabets, and seeking to give the reader the meat of each verse. Tasker represents a generally conservative position, but one could ask for greater definiteness. He is unwilling to state that John the son of Zebedee is the author, only that John was the work in perhaps the capacity of a friend of the writer or writers. The reviewer is left cold by the arguments of scholars who seek to divorce the text from the actual writing of the fourth gospel. The arguments of the reviewer are entirely unsubstantiated either by history or internal evidence.

In general, however, we would say that the busy pastor, the theologian and perhaps the discriminating layman could use Dr. Tasker's book to good profit. It will not be thorough enough for the demanding scholar, but undoubtedly fill a need in the church.

J. A. O. Preus