

6-1-1947

Miscellanea

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Recommended Citation

Franzmann, Martin H. (1947) "Miscellanea," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 18, Article 39.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol18/iss1/39>

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Miscellanea

Return to "Primacy of Exegesis"

The appearance of the first issue of a new and stately quarterly entitled *Interpretation, A Journal of Bible and Theology** in January of this year is interesting in two ways: first, as a straw in the theological wind indicating a trend observable for some years in the churches of England and on the Continent, and, more recently, in America. It is an indication of the "current concern for the Bible," to quote the editorial of *Interpretation*, "a yearning for light from the Bible. One may find evidence of this concern on every hand. It is prompted by desperate conditions. It is deepened by the failure of man's own devices. It is reflected in the whole trend of theological thought. . . . Hence the journal *Interpretation*. The aim of this new religious quarterly is to bring together the best fruits of biblical studies and to make them available to ministers, teachers, and laymen. The purpose of *Interpretation* can be stated even more concisely: to promote a positive, constructive expression of biblical and theological studies. The Bible student, at whatever level he works, needs a journal which is neither the medium of highly technical studies nor the vehicle for vagaries of exposition. *Interpretation* intends to meet that need." The tone set by the editorial is that of the whole journal: there is the inevitable reluctance to give up at once and altogether the critical reservations that generations of exclusively critical study of the Bible have left as their residuum in theological minds, but at the same time one notes throughout the journal both in the articles and in the reviews a serious theological concern with the Bible, both Testaments, as the inscripturation of God's revelation of Himself, a thoroughgoing renunciation of the vicious, condescending attitude toward the Word which has blighted Scriptural studies for these many years. For example, Bruce Mezger administers a grave but sound spanking to Riddle and Hutson in his review of their *New Testament Life and Literature* for being "unaware of a whole dimension involved in the life of the primitive Christian Church, namely, the activity of the personal living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." "It must be insisted," he goes on to say, "that the New Testament was written by men filled with the Holy Spirit, was circulated and collected by the church, and cannot be understood outside that continuing community."

This basic attitude, whatever its limitations, makes the journal of interest to Lutheran theologians and students of the Scriptures in another way—substantively, as an aid and stimulus in their studies. The journal is professedly designed for a somewhat wider

* *Interpretation*, 3401 Brook Road, Richmond 22, Virginia. Subscription: \$2.00 per year (single copies, 75 cents). Foreign: \$2.25 per year (single copies, 80 cents) in U. S. funds.

public than most theological publications; but that this does not necessarily involve shallowness is demonstrated, for instance, by Edwin Lewis' study of Philippians 2, "The Humiliated and the Exalted Son," a thoroughgoing and reverent piece of work, having as its point of departure the truism that "the interpreter cannot properly interpret unless he shares the standpoint from which the passage was first written." The writer does not disdain to explain to readers who possess no Greek that "obedient unto Death" does not mean "obedient to the power of Death"; at the same time, he deals very thoroughly with the implications of the word *Morphe*.

If succeeding issues bear out the promise of the first, the journal will offer rich and interesting fare; there are four major articles: "The Relevance of Biblical Interpretation," by H. H. Rowly; "The Humiliated and Exalted Son," already referred to; "The Hammer and the Anvil: Jeremiah," by Harris E. Kirk; "Behold Your God!" a study of Isaiah 40:9, by Paul F. Barackman. In one of the regular departments, "Implements of Interpretation," Donald G. Miller deals informatively and suggestively with the history and utility of concordances; the other regular department, "The Interpreter's Forum," contains a homily on John 15:1-12 and a discussion of the thought-links in Matthew 7.

Not the least valuable section is that entitled *Books*; besides the twelve major reviews, there are over sixty short reviews and notices of better-than-average relevance, and a survey of the New Testament literature of 1946 by Floyd V. Filson.

It is not, of course, a Lutheran journal; but it speaks a language that is at least a dialect of the ecumenical Lutheran language and contains much that warms the Lutheran heart. One would use it with the same reserve, and the same gratitude, that one brings to such works as Kittel's *Theologisches Woerterbuch des Neuen Testaments*.

M. H. FRANZMANN

Notes on Emil Brunner's

The Christian Doctrine of God *

There is no doubt that Emil Brunner's new *Dogmatik* will find many readers both because of its novel approach and its neo-orthodox content. So far as its approach is concerned, it is more lucid, concise, and methodical than is Barth's long-winded, obscure, and often bewildering *opus*. In his direct and clear-cut presentation of the subject matter Brunner follows American rather than German patterns.

The volume, together with a threefold index of passages, persons, and topics, covers 391 pages. The title page, table of contents, and Foreword add additional pages. The *Dogmatik* is divided into two chief parts: "Prolegomena" (118 pages) and "The Eternal Foundation of the Divine Self-Revelation," which embraces "Theology Proper" (God's Essence and Attributes) and the "Doc-

* *Die christliche Lehre von Gott. Dogmatik 1.* Zwingli-Verlag, Zurich, 1946.

trine of the Divine Will," i. e., that of the divine decrees, especially the decree of Predestination, which is discussed at considerable length in its dogmatico-historical development up to Barth. The doctrine of Scripture is treated on five pages of small print as the last of a number of dogmatico-historical discussions under the head of the "Authority of Scripture." Whether or not Brunner will treat the *locus* of Holy Scripture later in a more elaborate exposition is not indicated in the Foreword, which in no way projects Brunner's methodology, though it declares that since he has covered the four-semester *turnus* of Dogmatics for more than twenty years, his *Dogmatik* is now pretty well complete in manuscript. He justifies his publication of a Dogmatics by stating that since Barth has decided to present the subject matter of Christian doctrine in so lengthy and detailed a manner, a more brief Doctrinal Theology will no doubt be welcomed by students of theology.

So far as the *content* of the *Dogmatik* is concerned, there appears this difference between Barth's and Brunner's works, that while in general the former is inclined to adhere more closely to traditional Reformed theology, the latter is not afraid to cut the ties when he thinks that this should be done. While both are subjectivistic, Brunner exceeds his colleague in his more daring and determined departure from tradition.

This becomes apparent to the reader already when he studies Brunner's *concept* of Dogmatics. To Brunner dogmatizing is "a function of the Church" (p. 3), an "ecclesiastical science" (p. 6), since it is the business of the Church to teach, and Dogmatics is no more and no less than the "science of Christian teaching" (p. 5). That means, however, that the Church does not simply restate what Matthew, Paul, or John have declared, but, as the teacher of God's Word, it must proclaim what in these differing and diverging doctrines is the one divine truth (p. 14 f.). Brunner repudiates the simple "biblicistic process" of "merely reproducing the Biblical doctrine." This he regards as an impossibility (p. 15), for all theologizing, he holds, involves a critical process of systematization (p. 15). Such as imagine that they do adhere to the simple Bible doctrine deceive themselves, for whatever the Church teaches, it teaches on the basis of its normative decision of what is true doctrine (*ibid.*); in other words, the Church's formulation of doctrine is the norm of doctrine. This, in the final analysis, is good Roman Catholic doctrine, though apparently Brunner does not seem to be aware of it. Yet to this position he is driven by his phobia of Biblicism.

But what, then, is Brunner's attitude to the Scriptures? To him the Bible as such is not the source and norm of the Christian faith. He readily admits that revelation in the prophetic word is just as historical (real) as is that in Jesus Christ. The inward realization of the divine revelation, however, occurs only in Christ. God reveals His Son in us just as He revealed Him, e. g., to Paul (cf. Gal. 1:15; p. 23). Brunner thus teaches a quasi *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, but one that occurs not through, but only in connection

with the word of Scripture (*ibid.*). Scripture to him is only the *crèche* in which Christ, the real Word, lies. It is inspired by the Spirit of God, but at the same time it is a mere human word, and therefore burdened with all the frailty and imperfection of whatever is human (p. 40). Since, however, it contains the testimony of the Apostles, which motivates and engenders faith, it has a certain normative authority (p. 53). ("The doctrine of the apostles is the primary means through which Revelation comes to us.") But since the doctrine of Christ is not Jesus Christ Himself, its authority is only relative (p. 64). Thus to Brunner the whole concept of the source of theology becomes subjective; in the field of epistemology he is an experimentalist.

No less subjective and speculative is Brunner's conception of the Christian dogma. To Brunner, dogma is not simply that which Holy Scripture teaches, but what the Church regards as authoritative or fundamental (*massgeblich*). These standard truths are laid down in the Confessions of the Church (p. 61), but these also have only a relative authority. Nevertheless, the Confessions of the Church universal constitute the ecclesiastical dogma, and this the dogmatician must analyze, co-ordinate, and present in its rational (historical) development. Dogmatics thus becomes the mediating agency between secular science and the Church's supernatural faith witness (p. 77). Of course, for its dogmatic propositions it must supply "Scripture proof." But while the dogmatical method dare not be arbitrary and while it must avoid all "verbalistic legalism" (p. 92), it must demonstrate the validity of its theses from the revelation given in Scripture (p. 92). Just how the theologian is to do this, Brunner does not state directly; but when he describes Dogmatics as the believer's reflection and contemplation of the content of faith (p. 98), he intimates his dogmatic method at least in a general way. As the Church's confession is subjective, so also is the process by which the dogmatician demonstrates the articles of faith purely subjective. And neither can the Church claim infallibility for its confession, nor the dogmatician for the validity of his system of teaching. Brunner thus repudiates the orthodox *principium cognoscendi* (*Schriftprinzip*), denies the objectivity of the Christian truth, and opens the door most widely for liberal speculation.

Brunner rejects both the verbal inspiration and the infallibility of Scripture, and for this position he claims Luther as an ally, basing his claim on assertions and arguments which Dr. Pieper in his *Christliche Dogmatik* has proved to be altogether nugatory. (Cf. *Christliche Dogmatik*, Bd. I, p. 334 ff.) His position is described in his words: "It is not demanded that we believe Scripture simply because it is Scripture; but [we believe Scripture] because in Scripture this Content, Christ, faces me, of which I become convinced in my conscience that it is truth and for which reason I believe. Scripture is not the formal authority which *a priori* covers the whole Scripture content and demands for it faith; but it is an instrumental authority, inasmuch as in it

the Content (Christ) is brought to me, before which I in truth must bow and which therefore of itself creates in me the assurance of truth" (p. 116). Of this his view he says: "This is what Luther means by 'Word of God.' That [the Word of God] is not identical with Scripture, though it is given to me in no other way than through Scripture and indeed through the word of Scripture" (*ibid.*). It requires no further demonstration to show that this means the total rejection of the *sola Scriptura* in the traditional orthodox sense. Brunner belongs to those liberal theologians who in the final analysis develop their theology out of their speculative "faith-consciousness."

Brunner's speculative method manifests itself in a negative way also in his treatment of the doctrine of God. There is much in this part of his *Dogmatik* which is in consonance with the traditional church doctrine. But again and again Brunner's rationalizing method leads him away from the theology of the Bible. This is apparent especially in his exposition of the doctrine of God. Brunner blames the Church for having placed the three Persons in the Godhead co-ordinatingly *side by side* (*nebeneinander*) instead of putting them one after the other (*hintereinander*). It is true that often he speaks so vaguely and obscurely that the reader is kept in doubt as to what he really means. But when he writes: "This *mysterium logicum*, namely, that God is three and yet one, lies completely outside the biblical proclamation. It is a mystery which the Church in her theology presents to the believers and by which she burdens and binds its faith with a heteronomy that indeed corresponds to her false claim of authority, but not to the message of Jesus and His apostles" (p. 239); and when he calls the traditional doctrine of the Trinity a theological defense measure (*Schutzlehre*) for the central Bible teaching, which never should have become a confession (*kerygma*); and when he lastly declares: "Inasmuch as the Church has made it such (a confession), it has given faith a false direction" (p. 240), it is obvious that Brunner does not accept the traditional orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity. What he teaches, appears to be a modified Modalism.

When treating the doctrine of predestination Brunner almost oversimplifies matters. While he rejects the Calvinistic doctrine of a divine eternal decree of predestination unto salvation and unto damnation, and while also he allows no room for any *apokatastasis*, or universal restitution, and while he lastly declares himself at variance with Barth's doctrine of election ("even reprobates belong to the elect. With the exception of Christ there is no reprobate," p. 377), he briefly puts his own doctrine thus: "In Christ God has elected all who believe in Him, but not those who refuse Him the obedience of faith" (p. 369). Brunner thus teaches a quasi *intuitu fidei* doctrine of election, and he justifies this in view of "God's holiness and love, which in Christ are identical, but which outside of Christ are contradictory" (p. 369).

Brunner's *Dogmatik* champions what is more or less fitly known

as neo-orthodoxy. In spite of his departure from Barth, he is at heart a Barthian, and with his Swiss colleagues he propounds a subjective Liberalism which, just because of its adherence to traditional forms and terms, is bound to lead many to believe that his theology is basically orthodox. But Brunner's theology is not the theology of Holy Scripture. In his theological method Brunner, though in an independent way, has gone back to Schleiermacher and Ritschl, and he continues the trend of liberal theological speculation, which has ever dethroned Holy Scripture and enthroned in its place perverse and conceited human reason.†

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

Egypt — A Land of the Past *

Egypt is a vast necropolis, a city of the dead. The present generation makes its living largely through guarding and showing what was achieved thousands of years ago. In an additional sense Egypt is a country of the dead. The treasures of antiquity that are exhibited are largely things that have to do with death—tombs, sarcophagi, statues of kings erected by themselves to keep alive their memory after they had departed this life, offerings and presents placed beside the dead bodies, and, chief of all, the dead persons themselves, that is, their mummies.

A few details should be submitted. Everybody has heard of the pyramids, listed among the seven wonders of the ancient world. The largest of them are of stupendous size. The best known and hugest is that of Khufu, often referred to as Cheops, located about ten miles from Cairo. The guidebook says there are in it 2,300,000 blocks of yellowish limestone, each one containing 40 cubic feet and weighing, on an average, 2½ tons. Its height is 450 feet, and it covers 13 acres. Standing beside it one feels as the ants at our feet would feel if they possessed human intelligence. What the priests told Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century before Christ who visited Egypt, does not seem to be an exaggeration—that it took 100,000 men twenty years to build this pyramid, working three months a year. And this giant structure was intended to house the mortal remains of only one man and his wife, King Khufu and his Queen! It was given such huge dimensions because the king wished to impress future generations with his might and greatness, and in that point he succeeded.

But in another respect his objective was frustrated. The builder of this mausoleum desired to have his body given a secure resting place, where no enemy or robber could find it. For that

† After this review was written, we saw the incisive criticism of Brunner's *Dogmatik* by Regin Prenter in *Theologische Zeitschrift*, Zuerich, III, p. 58 ff. [January-February issue]. In the main this review shows that Brunner is a subjective and not a Bible theologian in the Lutheran tradition.

* Dr. W. Arndt, who is on leave of absence to assist Church-Craft Pictures in filming Biblical scenes, spent several weeks in Egypt and herewith presents an eyewitness account.

reason the entrance to the passage leading to the burial chamber in the interior was carefully concealed when the body had been deposited there. It was covered with stone, and no persons inspecting the structure could detect any opening. But at an early age, perhaps seven hundred years after the pyramid had been built, robbers did enter it and made a passage which finally connected with the secret tunnel leading to the burial chamber. When the tomb was entered by scientists about one hundred fifty years ago, they found in it an empty, coverless mutilated sarcophagus of red granite. The mummy, and the ornaments which presumably filled the room, were gone, and nobody knows whereto. Later rulers living about the time of the Prophet Isaiah and taking an interest in the ancient monuments repaired the damage done the pyramid by the robbers, but the body of the king was not recovered. . . .

Truly overwhelming are the ancient remains which one finds in Luxor and Karnak and across the Nile from these places four hundred fifty miles up the river from Cairo. Once upon a time this whole city area on both sides of the Nile was known as Thebes, the 100-gated Thebes of Homer. Here again one sees that Egypt is a country of the dead. All the monuments on the west bank of the river, even in ancient times, had to do with death, its victims, its lessons, its dread. The vast temples built here by Seti I, and Rameses II, and other monarchs are known as mortuary temples. The remains of the kings were taken there for special religious ceremonies, and from there they were conveyed to their tomb in the Valley of the Kings, a mile or two farther west. Erecting pyramids as tombs for themselves had been the practice of the kings in the early days of Egyptian history. However, at the time when the Israelites sojourned in that country, the monarchs had their tombs hewn out of live rock, deep down in the recesses of the earth. Traveling abreast of a ridge of high rocky hills after the fertile green plains on the west side of the Nile have been traversed, one sees many large openings in the cliffs that lead to burial places of the aristocracy. By and by the winding road takes one to a valley separated by high hills from the fields of the Nile, the celebrated Valley of the Kings. The whole region is absolutely without vegetation, a part of the desert, and looks stern and forbidding. Here for about five hundred years Egyptian kings prepared their burial places, fitting them out with many paintings and decorations and hoping that after the bodies had been deposited there and the entrances had been carefully closed with sand and boulders, no robber would be able to detect the passageway leading to the funeral chamber. These hopes were not realized; the tombs were rifled in spite of all precautions of the kings and priests. The only tomb that was left undisturbed, as far as present knowledge goes, was that of Tutaûkhamen, protected by fallen rocks which entirely blocked the entrance. When the robbers invaded the burial chambers, they often did not remove the mummies, but merely the abundant

jewels that decorated the corpses. Owing to the lack of safety pertaining to the bodies of the kings, certain priests collected all the royal mummies they could and put them in more secure hiding places from which many have been taken to the Museum of Egyptian Antiquities in Cairo. Thus it is still the dead that are the center of attraction in Egypt.

The colossal temples of Luxor and Karnak were built as places of worship, but even there the honor to be shown the dead monarchs and other deceased people of prominence loomed large. At Karnak, beside the greatest of all temples in existence, which really is a series of temples, adorned with obelisks and long rows of sphinxes extending from the gates in the four directions of the compass, and having a festal hall with 134 gigantic columns which simply prostrate the visitor through their magnitude and magnificence—beside this temple there is a sacred lake on which the corpse of the king was rowed around in a holy ceremony, symbolizing probably the passage of the soul into the next world. The statues of the kings and queens that are to be seen in great number, the inscriptions on the columns and walls and obelisks, all are intended to keep alive the memory of departed rulers. Thus Egypt can well be called the land of the dead; the present generation capitalizes on the former population of the country.

The Christian visitor cannot help exclaiming: "What a *testimonium animae*, a witness to the existence of an immortal soul which is aware of its immortality and knows that it must appear before a righteous Judge!" How many of the millions who lived here in the ancient periods had knowledge of the God of truth and grace and forgiveness who manifested Himself in a special revelation in the Scriptures? WM. ARNDT

Artificial Insemination

Artificial insemination is the impregnation of a woman with spermatozoa of a man who is not her husband. The question at issue is: May a wife whose husband is not fertile resort to artificial insemination? May she have a test-tube baby?

The following item from *Religious News Service* has brought the matter to our attention again: "British churchmen and doctors are divided as to whether 'test-tube' babies should be encouraged. Most churchmen denounced artificial insemination as 'degrading and adulterous unless the donor is the woman's husband.' On the other hand, some doctors said the practice is 'often justifiable because it will bring into many homes happiness where unhappiness previously existed, and tends not to destroy but to safeguard the marriage.' Dr. Mary Barton, a gynecologist, said 300 'test-tube' babies have been born in England during the last five years as the result of artificial insemination by strangers, and 'thousands' after artificial insemination by husbands. She added that 10 per cent of all British marriages are infertile, and adoption, in 70 per cent of cases, would not satisfy the woman's maternal instinct."

Artificial insemination is nothing altogether new. The first

reported case of artificial insemination occurred in England in 1790. Recently, however, it has been brought to the attention of the general public in magazine articles. Merely as a matter of information, but not pertinent as far as the moral issue is concerned, it may be said that artificial insemination is not always successful, and that in some cases it must be repeated many times before it is effective.

We are interested to know what attitude we must take on the basis of Scripture. For the procreation of the human race God has made the provision that children should be born in wedlock as a result of a husband and his wife becoming one flesh, Gen. 2:24. God makes fornication, that is, sexual relation of a husband or wife with a stranger, a cause of divorce, Matt. 19:9. In artificial insemination a wife is impregnated with the spermatozoa of a strange man, a man not her husband. In the sexual relation which is thus established there is no essential difference whether a wife becomes pregnant by natural sexual intercourse with another man not her husband or by the unnatural intercourse of artificial insemination. A wife is to have children from her own husband and not from another man. A childless wife, irrespective whether she or her husband is sterile, should take such an affliction as a cross laid upon her by God Himself, Gen. 30:1, 2. ("And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?") A childless wife cannot know whether God after all will not give her children; she should abide His time, Gen. 30:22, 23 (Rachel); 1 Sam. 1:2, 19, 20 (Hannah); 2 kings 4:14-17 (the Shunammite woman). In addition, Scripture speaks of, and warns against, the unnatural use of the sexual organs. Paul speaks of women, and likewise of men, "changing the natural use into that which is against nature," Rom. 1:26. Artificial insemination is certainly not using the sexual organs in the way in which the Creator has provided. Again, prohibited degrees of marriage are determined by sexual relation. When it is not known whose semen is being used for artificial insemination, a forbidden sex relation might be established. It may be added that at least one legal opinion has held "that *fecundation ab extra* is adulterous." (*Time*, February 26, 1945.)

When a woman's own husband has become incapacitated by injury, as, for instance, in war, to perform the sexual act, the question arises whether, if that be possible, his wife may be artificially impregnated with her own husband's semen. Or, may this be done, when both are fertile and have sexual intercourse, but for some unknown reason no pregnancy results? We are of the opinion that that must be decided by the individual conscience. Of course, a conscientious physician should be consulted. A parishioner will also desire to speak to his pastor.

J. H. C. FRITZ