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### THE IMPRINT OF TILLICH

Perspectives on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Protestant Theology, *by Paul Tillich, edited by Carl E. Braaten* (Harper and Row, 1967, 252 pp., \$5.95); *The Vision of Paul Tillich, by Carl J. Armbruster, S.J.* (Sheed and Ward, 1967, 328 pp., &6.95), and *The Fabric of Paul Tillich's Theology, by David H. Kelsey* (Yale University Press, 1967, 202 pp., \$6), are reviewed by *Gordon H. Clark, professor of philosophy, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana.*

The first of these three books was posthumously printed from tape recordings of the 1963 lectures at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Despite Tillich's reputation for profundity or unintelligibility, these impressionistic remarks on two dozen philosophers (often too short for scholarly accuracy: two pages for Strauss and Baur, only two pages for Feuerbach) are easier reading than Karl Barth's work on nineteenth century theologians.

As a summary of impressionistic evaluation, the book contains caricature, distortion, and highly stimulating insights. Tillich makes clear the affinity between rationalism and mysticism; he partly explains the course of theology in America by the absence of Romanticism; he enthusiastically over-rates Schelling (in my impressionistic judgement), yet pages 141-152 are possibly the finest in the book.

Although there is none of his systematic theology here, one quickly sees that his view of faith and of the very nature of religion is far removed from Protestant orthodoxy. This latter he lampoons. He is guilty of falsification when he writes that American conservatives identify the King James Version with the true Word of God. Similarly he must plead ignorance or intellectual dishonesty, forty years after the publication of B.B. Warfield's works and after other public disclaimers, when he attacks "the view of a mechanically dictated and inspired Word of God, as if God were dictating to a stenographer at a typewriter." This is a standard procedure with the liberals, who do not wish to face the arguments of historic Protestantism. But with respect to the non-Christian philosophers, the book is interesting and suggestive.

The Jesuit book is mainly expository and concerns the relation between Christianity and culture. After a short but informative biographical sketch, the author develops Tillich's views on "ultimate concern." Something is said of idolatrous faith, the clean holy and the unclean holy,

and the demonic. There is a little criticism in the last chapter but not enough to clarify the important issues.

Kelsey has produced a small gem of scholarship. The problem is this: If the historical accuracy and literal meaning of the Bible are unimportant, if the Gospels give only an aesthetic picture of Jesus, if the apostles preach merely their own experience, how can theology be biblical today?

Tillich claims to get his interpretation of the Bible from three norms: the relation of the symbols to one another; the relation of the symbols to that to which they point; and an aesthetic criticism that distinguishes between adequate and inadequate symbols so that symbolism is not reduced to non-symbolic statements. Kelsey proceeds to examine whether Tillich was able to carry through his program.

A meticulous but far from dull analysis of Tillich's texts convinces Kelsey that emphasis on existential religious experience makes Tillich a second Feuerbach. Theology has become anthropology.

To disguise this atheism, Tillich uses equivocal and misleading expressions. When he defines reason as "the structure of the mind," he never defines structure; and his description of the "depth of reason" is even more mystifying. Again, when Tillich asserts that the existence of Jesus could be disconfirmed by historical research, and yet that "the fact-claim made about the foundation of Christian faith is not open to criticism," his argument is "misleading." For a third example, Tillich tries to argue that Jesus must have been something like the distorted picture in the Gospels, for mediation requires this. Says Kelsey, "This is an astonishing argument for Tillich. ... On his own grounds it can have no theological significance. ... It is also a bad argument." Kelsey, though not subscribing to Protestant orthodoxy, also notes that there is no evidence that the Synoptics distort. In conclusion, Tillich depends on ambiguity in the term "meaning," on two incompatible views of aesthetics, and on an ambiguous use of the term "God."

Tillich began by attempting to interpret the picture of Jesus. But the outcome in the form of preaching is a sermon that needs no mention of Jesus – merely attitudes towards life of a general sort possible for any religion. Art gives attitudes, not truth. The New Testament, on the contrary, makes truth-claims.