

**THE STRANGE SILENCE OF THE BIBLE IN THE CHURCH**, by James D. Smart. *SCM*, London, 1970. 186 pp. £1.05.

In this account of what Professor Smart thinks is the Protestant American's neglect of the Bible, and the origin of this neglect in the 'multiple breakdown in communication' between biblical scholars and preachers, and between both and the faithful congregation, there are sections on the divisive work of archaeologists, demythologizing exegetes, and new critics, and some quite bitter thrusts at the seminary professors who place the departments of theology in rigid isolationist positions, thus defeating the purpose of the seminary to be a community of theological discussion. Much of what Professor Smart has to say is neither new nor foolish but he has not made of his material anything very readable.

This is a particularly stuffy piece of American book-making. The references are to the world of the New Hermeneutic and that triumph of exegetical technology, the Anchor Bible, and of the Supreme Court decisions on religion in the public school, and the writing is of that dulling kind indulged by those who purvey more facts than the expert expects and less than the layman requires, and who resist meanwhile the degrading impulse to make the subject clear for the parish priest and the school-teacher.

Foreign interests have, however, some mention. Though the Orthodox tradition is ignored, the German Protestants are largely present, and there is a nice remark about the Roman Catholics:

The achievements of Pope John XXIII and Vatican Council were possible only through the liberating authority of a rediscovered gospel. Those who in high places have now become frightened by the changes that are taking place and try to halt them do not reckon with the nature and dimensions of the power that is at work behind the changes. They have let the Scriptures loose in their church and they must accept the consequences.

Let them laugh at that!

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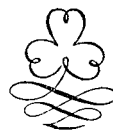
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