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Book Review. - Literatur

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Book Review

All books reviewed in this periodical may be procured from or through Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis 18, Mo.

Moses—Builder of Altars. By Basil Miller. Published by Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 154 pages, 5½×8. \$1.50.

Dr. Miller, the author, is a very prolific writer, but in the present volume he becomes guilty of many inaccuracies which mar the usefulness of the book. There is no warrant for the author's statement that Queen Hatshepsut "on the walls of this sand-covered palace, only recently excavated, wrote the story of her discovery of Moses in the Nile and under her own signature verifies the facts Moses penned in his autobiographical second chapter of Exodus" (18). It is very doubtful whether "rightly Gershom, Moses' first-born son, could be called the contender for the Egyptian throne" (21). The statement that Moses at the time he slew the Egyptian "had not attempted Israel's deliverance, for he had not yet caught the delivering vision," is in direct contradiction of Acts 7:25. We would hardly subscribe to the statement that Mount Horeb "which was Israel's spiritual birthplace, possessed a significance corresponding to that which Independence Hall holds for Americans." Highly as we regard Independence Hall, there is a vast difference between that and Mount Horeb. It was not "the group of men" that encouraged Korah and his company to burn incense before the Lord, but Moses himself in order to bring the whole matter to a test. Num. 16:5-7, 16-18 (114). Neither is there any indication that after this incident Moses "began to fail in taking his leadership responsibilities to the Lord" (116). And again the author contradicts the Biblical statements, Num. 21:1 compared with Num. 33:36-38, when he asserts that thirty-eight years elapsed after the disobedience of Moses and Aaron, and describes Moses during these years as a "man of one dimension" (118). These are some of the inaccuracies which make us hesitate to recommend this book to our readers.

THEO. LAETSCH

The Person of Christ. By Loraine Boettner, D.D. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. 215 pages, 5¼×7¾. \$2.00.

The Lutheran theologian will find much valuable material in this lucid and vigorous presentation of the doctrines of the Person, the States, and the Offices of Christ. He will profit by studying the way in which the deep mysteries of the deity of Christ, His humanity, His impeccability together with His temptability, the anhypostasia, and enhypostasia, the union of the two natures and other related matters are here presented in simple language. He will regret that while our author subscribes to the teaching of Scripture and the ancient Church on the *genus idiomaticum* ("What can be affirmed of either of His natures can be affirmed of the person. . . . The chief error of the Nestorian system was that in separating the divine and human natures

it deprived His human sufferings of the value and efficacy that they must have if they are to be sufficient for the redemption of mankind," pp. 103, 207), he will not accept the *genus majestaticum* ("Human nature is ever finite, Reformed theology declares, and is no more capable of infinite *charismata* than of the infinite *idiomata* or attributes of the divine nature. . . . As a man He did not and never can become omniscient, for the simple reason that human souls by their very nature are finite," pp. 83, 86), and that he has yielded to the chiliastic delusion ("It is true, of course, that the Old Testament prophecies do foretell a great golden age of political freedom and material prosperity in connection with the Messianic kingdom. . . . The world is to be eventually conquered by the Church," pp. 161, 191). With these exceptions, Dr. Boettner refuses to be swayed by "the philosophical assumption that the supernatural is impossible" (p. 102) and sticks to the principle that Scripture is the sole source and norm of Christian doctrine. And the Christian theologian rejoices to read a book like this, in which page after page is filled with Scripture passages and which rests its case exclusively on a quotation from Scripture.—We also want to call attention to the fact that our learned author does not disdain to make copious use of his "Shorter Catechism." Abstruseness is not a mark of good theology.

The Modernists, too, might study our book profitably. They would learn that they are the descendants of the ancient heretics. "The earliest heretical view concerning the person of Christ was that known as 'Ebionism.' . . . It denied the possibility of a union of the divine and the human nature and so ruled out the doctrine of the incarnation. They acknowledged Him only as a great prophet or teacher during His earthly career" (p. 202). And "not until the rise of Socinianism in the sixteenth century do we find an important defection from the Church doctrine; and that was in substance a recrudescence of the ancient Ebionite heresy, which denied the deity of Christ. Present-day Unitarianism and Modernism, which are essentially denials of the supernatural in religion, trace their origin back to the same movement" (p. 210). "In the Council of Nicaea the Church faced what we believe to have been the greatest crisis in the entire history of doctrine [Arianism]. It was, however, although in a slightly different form, the same question that it faces in the twentieth century dispute between the Evangelical Faith and Modernism" (p. 205).

The concluding paragraphs of our book contain these statements: "We seem upon the verge of a second Unitarian defection that will break up churches and compel secessions in a worse manner than did that of Channing and Ware a century ago. American Christianity recovered from that disaster only by vigorously asserting the authority of Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures. . . . It is both our duty and privilege to tell others of this wonderful Savior and of the redemption that has been purchased for them by Him. . . . 'Without a revival of this faith our churches will become secularized, mission enterprise will die out, and the candlestick will be removed out of its place as it was with the seven Churches of Asia and as it has been with the apostate Churches of New England.'" TH. ENGELDER

Reserves of the Soul. By J. Calvin Reid. John Knox Press, Richmond, Va. 156 pages, 5½×7½. Price, \$1.50.

Dr. Reid is a Presbyterian minister who studied theology at Pittsburgh-Xenia Theological Seminary and after his graduation, in Edinburgh and Oxford. His sermons are not without merit. They are well prepared, well organized, set forth distinctive messages, and *aliquo modo* present fundamentalist doctrine. But they also have many faults. Dr. Reid, for example, is wrong in his view of the "Word of God." "If we are to intelligently define the phrase 'the Word of God,' we refer, of course, not to the Bible in general, but to *God's supreme revelation* [italics his own] in the life and teachings of Jesus." (P. 131.) In his sermon "How Can the Church Speak with Authority" (p. 128 ff.) his thesis is that "it [the Church] must confront the institutions, ideas, and customs of the world with just one sharp question—*Is this in harmony with the will of God as seen in Jesus Christ?*" It is therefore God's sovereign authority that must settle the problems of business, industry, drink, and the race question. "America must eliminate the color barrier by a genuine practice of good will." In his sermon "The Contagion of Sin" (p. 55 ff.) he arrives at the lesson he means to teach, namely, that sin in every case is contagious, by a strange untruth. His text 2 Kings 5:27 clearly shows that it was because of the prophet's curse that Gehazi became leprosy: "The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave unto thee." But Dr. Reid traces Gehazi's leprosy to germs in Naaman's clothing, and so this becomes his untheological and unscientific theme: "Naaman's clothes always carry Naaman's leprosy." Again, it almost irks one to read that Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was "perhaps nearsightedness, or chronic malaria, possibly epilepsy" (p. 48), when both text and context suggest a malady much more severe than any of these, a malady not merely of the body, but primarily of the spirit. But Dr. Reid's main fault is that often he employs texts which do not at all say what he wants to teach. In a "stewardship message" ("Leftovers for God") he uses Is. 44:17: "And the residue thereof he maketh a god," both praising this idolater for not forgetting God entirely and chiding him for making a god only of the residue, which he interprets to mean that he gives only his residue to God. This, of course, is sheer nonsense and a mutilation of the text content. For his Easter message ("The Eastward Window") he has chosen the text 2 Kings 13:16, 17: "And Elisha said, Open the window eastward." Beginning with the "feeble old man Elisha" and then recounting the Robin Hood death story, he arrives at Easter's threefold lesson of hope, courage, and zeal. In his conclusion, the writer, of course, applies the lessons to Easter; but there is no adequate representation of what the Bible says regarding the meaning of Easter. There is no proper representation of sin and grace, Law and Gospel, divine wrath and love, and no clear answer to the question of questions: "What must I do to be saved?" Dr. Reid's erratic way of preaching, we are told, is becoming increasingly popular also in Lutheran circles. But unless the minister selects a text that really says what he means to say, and unless he plainly explains the text to his hearers and applies it to their needs, he is not only unfaithful to

his high calling as a herald of the Word, but also wearies his hearers despite his many prose and poetic quotations; and what is worse, he is in danger of preaching neither Law nor Gospel, neither sin nor grace, as he should, and in the end he is bound to proclaim error which may damn the souls that come to him seeking salvation. There is much truth in the saying of the old Scottish divine that the preacher must not master his text, but that the text must master the preacher, which means that the preacher must not twist the text to suit his own opinions, but that the text must compel the preacher to proclaim the Word of God, as this is written in Scripture. J. THEODORE MUELLER

The Christ at the Peace Table. By Albert Field Gilmore, Litt. D. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York. 264 pages, 9×6. \$2.75.

In the first part of the volume the author, a Christian Scientist, presents the basic principles of Christian Science. In the second part he submits a program for the social and economic reconstruction of the world according to the Christian Scientist's "Christ," i. e., the "spirit of truth." The thesis of the book is the underlying principle of Christian Science, namely, that all is mind, that this mind is good, and that there is no room for evil. The theology and the philosophy of the book are neither Christian nor scientific. F. E. MAYER

Johann Sebastian Bach. By Laurence Nathaniel Field. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, Minn. 166 pages, 5¾×8¾. Price, \$1.50.

Field's *Johann Sebastian Bach*, in the reviewer's opinion, is not only a most valuable gift book for young and old Christians interested in the revival of sacred music, but also an excellent historical study deserving a place in all parish-school and Sunday-school libraries. The author, Dean of Religion and Professor of Hymnology and Liturgics at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, tells the story of "the greatest musician of his time and perhaps of all time" (Chas. O. Connell) with such unusual charm and force as to impress on the reader's mind indelibly the life and work, the joys and sufferings, the exaltation and humiliation, and, above all, the simple childlike piety and devotion of this remarkable Lutheran follower and servant of Christ. There is in the whole book not a single paragraph that will not interest the reader, not a sentence that he will find dull. The biography, expanded from a bachelor of divinity degree thesis, everywhere manifests the author's personal attachment to, and high admiration of, the outstanding Lutheran composer, who deserved so much recognition and yet was treated so shabbily that his musical compositions, valuable beyond description, remained to a large extent unpublished until long after his death, that his widow was forced to spend her last eight years of sorrow in a wretched almshouse after she had given up her husband's priceless manuscripts to be sold for a pittance or to be shelved or to be thrown away, and then was laid to rest, away from her husband's grave, in a pauper's row, and that the great composer's own grave remained unmarked, and was finally forgotten. Ungrateful and unappreciative generations having spurned his music, it was left to Felix Mendelssohn, a man of Semitic ancestry, recognizing the value of Bach's works, to restore to the world these greatest of Christian com-

positions. The mechanical make-up of the book is excellent. A picture of Bach and a facsimile reproduction of a manuscript page of Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*; the division of the biography into "books" with half-title pages marking the stages in Bach's life and musical progress; a very clarifying page of "Contents"; a carefully selected "Bibliography," and an exhaustive "Index" greatly enhance the value of the book. Well written and handsomely made up, this popular, yet exceedingly informative biography should find many friends and add new zest to the deserving modern Bach movement in ecclesiastical and secular circles. In a new edition the paragraphs telling about Bach's personal piety might perhaps be enlarged. The reviewer wonders if really, in so brief a biography, so much stress should be placed on the Bach-Marchand incident (p. 63 f.) or the Bach "psychological processes" at Arnstadt (p. 40 f.). Here the biography leaves its otherwise high level, and not to its advantage. Perhaps the proofreader nodded when on page 3 he permitted the writer to say that Bach was born in the year 1695. The half-title page gives the date correctly. But these are only minor flaws in a very fine book, which, we hope, will be widely read also in our own circles.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

The World's Great Sermons. Edited by S. E. Frost, Jr., B.D., Ph.D.
Published by Halcyon House, New York. 395 pages, 8½×5¾. \$1.98.

When paging through this book, one notices at once that not all sermons, if any, are complete. It seems that the compiler is presenting such portions as in his estimation will give a true picture of the sermonizer. A valuable feature of the book are its short biographical sketches. It cannot escape the Lutheran reader that of all Lutheran preachers only Luther and Melancthon are given space. All shades and varieties of preachers find a place in this book, such as St. Paul, Chrysostom, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, F. W. Robertson, MacLaren, Washington Gladden, Inge, Moffatt, Coffin, Fosdick, and Rabbi Silver.

J. H. C. FRITZ

Our Church. By J. M. Weidenschilling, M.A., S.T.D. Published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 109 pages, 5×7½. 35 cents.

Synod's Board of Christian Education is to be commended for authorizing the publication of this booklet, the contents of which had been published in the January, 1943, issues of the *Concordia Bible Student* and the *Concordia Bible Teacher*. The booklet is a revised and expanded form of this course for Bible classes. In plain language that every congregation member can understand, the author gives brief yet quite comprehensive information on many subjects that every Lutheran ought to know, as on church membership, church attendance, the liturgy of our Church, our Communion service, special services, the church year, our splendid heritage of song, our church buildings and art in the service of God, the office of the ministry, Christian education, the organization of a congregation, organizations within the congregation, and the rights and duties of a congregation with reference to Synod.

This book ought to be placed into the hands of our communicant members for home study and used by pastors and teachers in Bible classes and other educational agencies. It is truly *multum in parvo*.

THEO. LAETSCH

The Christian Boy's Problems. By Bertrand Williams. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 78 pages, 5x8. 75 cents.

The Christian Girl's Problems. Same author, same publisher. 79 pages, 5x8. 75 cents.

These are companion volumes, and we hail them as very appropriate studies to be added to the growing list of monographs on this important phase in the development of boys and girls. There is no attempt at scientific verbiage, but the author, addressing himself largely to the junior adolescents themselves, gives common-sense advice as to how to meet the difficulties which are apt to bother them. The boy is told about the need of a strong, healthy body, about relationships with girls, about his home life, and especially about his relation to his God. The young girl receives similar instruction concerning keeping herself clean and strong in body, mind, and soul. A few sentences from the concluding chapter of this book: "Getting the Most Out of the Christian Life," will indicate the character of the book: "If you would live right and prepare for a glorious young womanhood, you should not neglect this daily communion and contact with Christ. . . . Christ, who has saved you, also calls for those same talents, and as Christian girls you are to turn a deaf ear to the clamor of the world and offer your talents, your all, to Christ for His service. . . . You will find that the day goes much better if you will start it by prayerfully reading and studying the Word of God." We trust that these books will find their way to the bookshelves of many of our young Christians. Pastors will do well to use them in junior discussion groups.

P. E. KRETZMANN

To Our Subscribers

It has been our custom to retain the names of our subscribers on our lists for two numbers after the subscription has expired, so that the subscriptions could be continued without interruption in case a renewal came in late. We were very happy to follow this plan at extra expense, but we are now unable to continue this policy because of present conditions.

Our Government has insisted that we reduce consumption of paper and eliminate all possible waste. Because of the restriction in the use of paper it will become necessary to discontinue subscriptions to all of our periodicals with the last number paid for under the subscription agreement. We shall, however, continue our policy of reminding our subscribers of the expiration of the subscription by inserting the usual number of notices in the second last and the last numbers of the periodicals they receive. It is our sincere hope that our subscribers will co-operate with us and the Government by renewing their subscriptions promptly upon receipt of the first notice.

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