

5-1-1946

Book Review. - Literatur

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Recommended Citation

Mayer, F. E. (1946) "Book Review. - Literatur," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 17 , Article 33.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol17/iss1/33>

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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.

The Presence. By B. von Schenk. Ernst Kaufmann, Inc. 179 pages, 7¼×5¼. \$2.00.

The history of doctrine shows us that in combating false theological trends or doctrinal errors the "theological pendulum" has frequently swung from one extreme to the opposite extreme. In their zeal for the truth theologians are sometimes prone to overstate their case and thereby lapse into an error themselves. Nic. Amsdorf detested George Major's Romanizing statement: "Good works are necessary to salvation," and fell into the opposite extreme: "Good works are detrimental to salvation." His intentions were undoubtedly good, but his statement is untenable. The author of *The Presence* is motivated by the noble purpose of making the Lord's Supper more meaningful to our people and of encouraging them to commune devotionally and frequently. Every Lutheran pastor has given earnest thought to this problem, and—judging by some recent monographs, e. g., H. T. Kerr, *The Christian Sacraments*; E. S. Freeman, *The Lord's Supper in Protestantism*—this is a problem which concerns also the pastors in the "non-sacramental" churches. Many pastors will be vitally interested in this publication. There is indeed much food for thought in this book. Pastor von Schenk presents his main thesis in an arresting manner and quickens in the reader a desire to partake of the Supper frequently for the strengthening of his faith. Unfortunately the author does not preserve the proper theological equilibrium. There are so many overstatements in the book that the Lutheran reader is at times bewildered and confused and at other times in complete disagreement with the author.

1. The author prompted the reviewer to ask himself: Has my teaching of the Lord's Supper been so intellectual and dogmatic that I have failed to stress properly the spiritual blessings and to develop a truly devotional attitude in my hearers? The author intimates that the emphasis on the right doctrinal formula in the controversies with Romanists and Calvinists has overshadowed the real purpose of Communion. If that has been the case, then the remedy certainly does not lie in a submergence of the doctrinal side. The "theological pendulum" dare not swing to the other extreme and prompt us to say: "There have been controversies as to the exact nature of the Presence of our Lord and of His Body and Blood, but the fact which matters most is that He comes, not the way in which He comes" (p. 31; cp. 26—27). When during the Crypto-Calvinistic controversy the doctrine of the true Presence was denied by some Lutherans, Melancthon brushed the doctrinal consideration aside with the statement: "*Melius est corpus Christi in mentem tuam quam in ventrem tuum ire.*" The blurb recommends the book with the statement that the author "approaches the Holy Sacrament less from the intellectual and dogmatic side than from the devotional side." In our opinion this is a censure rather than an encomium, for while it is of course not sufficient "to think in terms of well-known doctrinal definitions" (11), no one can

derive the God-intended blessings if he relies on his emotions, experience, and devotion. We must apprehend the divine blessings, first "intellectually," we must first know doctrinally what God offers, before we can partake of these blessings "emotionally." Let us beware of a false mysticism. The pendulum can so easily swing in that direction.

2. All doctrines must center about the great redemptive work of Christ and our appropriation of the same. This implies that the preacher and teacher must give each doctrine its proper emphasis in relation to the central doctrine of our faith. Do we always maintain this proper balance? Do we present the whole counsel of God? Have we given the emphasis to the Lord's Supper which the Savior intended? The author believes that "the chief cause of this decline [of spirituality] is the neglect of the Blessed Sacrament and this neglect has been almost universal" (25). His endeavor to extol the blessings of the Lord's Supper is laudable. Unfortunately his method, if seriously followed, results in an eccentric theology. In his book he presents the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the New Obedience, the Church, and even Heaven as though God had focused the great truths of the Bible "at the Altar," where we can perceive them with our senses and physically realize them. The *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* is "the Altar." "Bethlehem comes to us in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. At the altar you find Bethlehem" (49). "The Holy Communion is the continuation of the Incarnation" (43). "At the Altar we link ourselves with the saints. Here we are caught up with them" (127). "The Altar is the trysting place where we meet our [departed] loved ones" (131). "In Holy Communion we have the basis for true Church unity and union" (156). The author holds that according to Luther living comes first and doctrines concerning it come second, and therefore he says that "at the Altar the believer is in fellowship with the Lord . . . and with all Christians who kneel at Christian Altars. . . . By receiving His Body from above we are to become His Body on earth. In the Holy Communion we have the basis for true Church unity and union. It transcends all denominational lines" (156, f.). "The Word preached is mingled with human imperfections, whereas that which is received in the Sacrament is wholly Divine. Therefore the Church must gather all her energies of faith and love, all her resources of splendor and devotion round the Divine Mystery of the Altar. The Most Blessed Presence under the forms of Bread and Wine is the sun and center, the heart and soul, of the worship to which she invites her children" (159). While these are not the author's own words they are quoted without comment by him. The theology presented in *The Presence* is an *ex parte* theology and therefore inadequate and not genuinely Lutheran as presented in Luther's monumental writings on the Lord's Supper and in the Formula of Concord.

3. What is the purpose of partaking of Holy Communion: strengthening of our faith in the forgiveness of sin or of our new spiritual life? The two go hand in hand. But have we probably so emphasized the former that we neglected the latter? The author's purpose is to show that there is a "connection between the victorious life and the Blessed Sacrament." And He brings

this truth home in a very striking manner. But the author loses himself so completely in this one theme that the first purpose of the Lord's Supper is almost entirely neglected. One would expect to find a clear-cut presentation of the vicarious atonement in a treatise on the Lord's Supper, especially in Part Two, where Calvary is discussed. But he does not say much more than the following brief paragraph: "In order that justice could be done, Love had to give itself. What happened? A little baby was born in Bethlehem. Thirty-three years later the man Jesus hangs on the Cross. Thus Justice and Love met and kissed" (60). In his zeal to make the Lord's Supper meaningful for sanctification, he goes to extremes. "He who gave Himself for me on the Cross is giving Himself to me as I come to the Altar. Then He gave Himself unto death. Now He gives Himself to me for life" (12). Indeed, Christ must dwell in us. But the author puts the "Christ in us" so to the fore, in fact, speaks of it as the at-one-ment, that the "Christ for us" is hard to find. He speaks in glowing terms of the mystical union (61), but there can be no union of man with God unless there is first a union of God with man through faith in Christ, who died for us, the *Christus extra nos et pro nobis*.

4. On one question in particular the "theological pendulum" has been swinging from one extreme to the other, and that is: How does the transcendent God reveal Himself to man? No man has seen God at any time, but in Christ Jesus He has revealed Himself to us, and we find God in the Word. This does not seem to be sufficient for some Roman and Anglican Catholics. Distinguishing sharply between body and soul, they believe that God's revelation to man must be in some tangible form. The author apparently has read a great deal in Roman and Anglican literature — at least he quotes extensively from these sources. And this influence is evident. "Our body is the only vehicle by which our spirit can work. God gives us the spiritual enshrined in the material. . . . It is because of this that the Christmas story is so meaningful. Bethlehem is brought down today at the Altar" (50). "We ask our catechumens where God is. They reply: 'Where the Word is.' How true. But is He not in some special place? Yes, at the Altar, for Christ says: 'This is My body'" (51). "God always focused Himself to a place. He had to do that because people are what they are" (86). God has promised His gracious presence in His Word (Romans 10), and we have no assurance that He is closer to us "at the Altar," where "the infinite is shrined in the finite, Heaven stoops down to earth, and the seen and the unseen meet" (132). This Romanticist principle is basic throughout the book and unfortunately mars some fine sections and distorts others entirely. The terminology employed in describing the Real Presence can be understood only in the sense of an impanation or a physical presence of Christ in the sacramental elements. "Then wrapped in Mary's arms, now wrapped in bread and wine" (53). Throughout the impression is created that our souls require something physical and tangible for a true worship and for true sanctification. "The Communion is a drama which exhibits the Mystery of Redemption more than any doctrinal teaching has ever been able to do" (15). It is not clear whether the author believes in the sacramental mode of eating and drinking or whether he has in mind a physical or metaphysical eating and drinking. "Christ

ought to be spiritually enfolded in the heart of every man" (16). The author's view that the invisible must be made tangible for us explains his view that the Sacrament can effect changes in the life of Christians which the Word cannot do so effectively. While he does not want to separate Word and Sacrament, he believes that the Sacrament is the climax of the worship (140—141). Does he mean that in the Sacrament the Word read in the Bible or spoken in the sermon is personalized and individualized? Then why state: "The Blessed Sacrament is the full means of grace"? (145.) Then why promise that the panacea of the Church's ills is found in a regular, weekly, even daily Communion? (146 f.) A thorough study of the Lord's Supper from the doctrinal as well as from the devotional side is not only a *desideratum* but a *necessarium*. The present treatise does not solve the problem. F. E. MAYER

The Infallible Word. A Symposium by the Members of the Faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary. The Presbyterian Guardian Publishing Co., 1505 Race St., Philadelphia 2, Pa. 300 pages (including index), 5½ × 7¾. \$2.50.

This fine and timely book, splendid in content and mechanical make-up, was written by the Westminster (Dr. Machen) Faculty to defend the Westminster Confession, ratified 300 years ago, which declares the Bible to be "given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life," and is directed chiefly against Neo-Barthianism, which denies the very fact that Holy Scripture is the infallible Word of God, given by inspiration, and as such the sole source and rule of faith. On the whole, Westminster's seven professors have done wisely and well, and their apologetic is worthy of the deep learning and sincere piety of their forefathers, who against Romanism defended the divine infallibility of the Holy Scriptures. The book contains seven treatises: "The Attestation of Scripture" (Murray); "The Authority of the Old Testament" (Young); "The Authority of the New Testament" (Stonehouse); "The Transmission of the Scriptures" (Skilton); "The Relevancy of Scripture" (Woolley); "Scriptural Preaching" (Kuiper); "Nature and Scripture" (Van Til). The reviewer believes this one of the best books written in defense of the Christian doctrine of Scripture in recent times, and he recommends it cordially to his fellow ministers for careful study. Perhaps Dr. Van Til's chapter on "Nature and Scripture" will give the reader some trouble, for it endeavors to demonstrate that natural theology (as originally given to Adam) is fully in agreement with and demanded the revealed theology which was imparted to man after the Fall, while dialectical theology fits in well with the natural (perverse) theology of the Aristotle-Thomas Aquinas-Kant tradition, so that with Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kant we must reject also the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Richard Kroner, Paul Tillich, Nels Ferré, and John Mackay. Not always could the reviewer agree with the learned writer, but the final result of his research is certainly true. The "natural theology" of ancient and modern rationalism is not the true natural theology which God inscribed into man's heart and which, though obscured, still is true so far as it goes. Rationalism rather represents a perversion of that true natural theology. All the authors are frank and convinced Calvinists, and therefore every now and then the Lutheran

reader will find occasion for dissent. But the fundamentals of Scripture, defended in this excellent book, are ecumenically Christian, and for this reason the book deserves the widest possible dissemination, since today the thesis which it champions is so widely and vehemently attacked by the opponents of the Christian faith.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

The Fulness of God. An Exposition of Ephesians from the Greek. By John H. Cable, Member of the Faculty, Moody Bible Institute. Moody Press, 153 Institute Place, Chicago, Ill. 160 pages, 5½ × 8. \$1.50.

Based on the Greek text and attempting to make the words of Ephesians more meaningful by frequent references to the original, this commentary, simple, brief, and unpretentious though it is, deserves a welcome. The author came to Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, from the Missionary Training Institute at Nyack, N. Y. Besides teaching he often fills appointments as visiting preacher. A reverent student of the Bible, he endeavors constantly to interpret Scripture by Scripture — certainly the best method that can be conceived of. He does not engage in long excursions or any very detailed discussion of controverted points. His aim is to draw attention to the great ideas of the Apostle and to set them forth on the basis of simple word studies. Illustrations and apt anecdotes are used liberally to drive home the important truths that are expressed in the Epistle.

Matters of technical scholarship are treated very briefly, if at all. The question whether Ephesians is a circular letter or whether it was originally meant for the Christians of one city (Ephesus) is disposed of in these few words (p. 15): "The fact that 'at Ephesus,' *en Epheso*, is omitted in some important Greek manuscripts causes us to think of this book as a circulatory letter suited to any Christian Church. Hence its teaching is more universally applicable. It challenges the devotion and fidelity of all. Its provisions and promises are for all. Its standards of conduct apply to all." The work does not pretend to be a scientific commentary. It can render service to the preacher or teacher who is looking for some stimulating comments on a text from Ephesians, often called the most profound Epistle of the New Testament.

W. ARNDT

The Significance of Silence and Other Sermons. By Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York. 238 pages, 8 × 5½. \$2.00.

The author of this book, Dr. Leslie D. Weatherhead, is heralded as a "great British preacher." If his greatness is to be judged by this book, it is not that of a great Christian preacher. He takes a wrong view of the Bible. He says: "The Bible begins with a beautiful legend about the beginning of things. The whole legend is summarized in the first four words: 'In the beginning God. . .'. In that lovely legend of the Creation the editor of Genesis is not trying to write a book of science. If he is still in heaven and takes interest about the things of earth, he must often have laughed at the wrangles of our great-grandfathers as to whether every word was literally and scientifically true. He wasn't interested in science. The word meant nothing to him. He was writing that lovely

parable to say that every beautiful thing we find on earth comes to us from God" (p. 129). Speaking of the writers of the Bible, he says: "So we find incorporated their prejudices, their beliefs, their background of cosmology and astronomy and philosophy" (p. 128). Again he says: "After all, just because the Gospels are human documents, we may expect that in details there will be matters which we shall never be asked to take as evidence of divine inspiration" (135). Although the author treats such subjects as "Why Should I Read the Bible?" "Youth Looking to Christ," and "A Message to the Spiritually Discouraged," one looks in vain for a clear statement of the Atonement. The author has given us a very disappointing book.

J. H. C. Furrz

These Live On. By Clyde H. Denis. Good Books, Inc., Chicago. 204 pages. 1945. \$2.00.

The title of this book is somewhat misleading. It would have us believe that the characters portrayed "live on" through the miraculous intervention of God in times of danger, while the wish of the author is that these stories might be preserved and "live on."

The book itself is a compilation, the various stories being written by different authors, often in the words of the characters themselves. As a consequence, the stories vary greatly in style and interest. Most of them are of the nature of testimonials, showing the mysterious power and presence of God in strengthening the faith of His children in times of danger and in miraculous conversions. While most of them reflect a deep, and sometimes touching, religious experience, a few smack more than a little of "foxhole" religion, a vague belief in the "Man Upstairs." Quite a few of the stories afford excellent material for sermon illustrations, e. g., "I Saw My Buddy Die," on p. 45, as an excellent illustration of the Atonement.

L. J. SNECK

BOOKS RECEIVED

The Minister Teaches Religion. By Frank A. Lindhorst. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York. 125 pages, 5¼×7¾. \$1.00.

He Is Able. By Chaplain Alvin O. Carlson. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 82 pages, 5½×7¾. \$1.00.

The Sign That Saves. By Alvin O. Carlson, Pastor, Chaplain, Conference Evangelist. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 41 pages, 5¼×7½. 35 cents.

From The Warner Press, Anderson, Ind.:

Bible Quiz Program Book. By Vivian Ahrendt. 156 pages, 7½×5. \$1.50.

From William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich.:

The Shadow of Coming Events. By Dr. Harry Rimmer. 294 pages, 8×5½. \$2.00.

Bible Questions Explained. By Louis T. Talbot, D.D. 280 pages, 7¾×5½. \$2.00.