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## Book Review. - Literatur

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## Book Review

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

**Government in the Missouri Synod.** By Carl S. Munding. Volume IV, The Concordia Historical Series, edited by W. G. Polack. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 1947. 247 pages, 6×9. \$3.00.

This volume is highly significant in several respects. It is the first in a projected series of monographs, authorized by the Literature Board of the Missouri Synod, on the history of its denomination. The designation "IV" refers to the chronology of the subject matter; this is the first volume to appear. This publication sets a standard and pace for the subsequent volumes which is stimulating and promising.

The volume is significant furthermore in its own right. Technically it deals with a very limited subject, namely, the origin of the lay-centered congregational polity of the Saxon Lutheran congregations which grew out of the immigration of 1839 and the reflections of that polity in the constitution of the Missouri Synod of 1847. This polity has in the past been frequently analyzed as a symptom of American democratic influence. The author seeks to demonstrate that the origin of "decentralized government in the Missouri Synod," as he terms it in his subtitle, lies in the powerful lay reaction against clerical and hierarchical tendencies which had nearly demolished the movement. His evidence for this position is both negative and positive. He demonstrates that the Missouri group was quite isolated from the democratic processes of America, from democratically minded thinkers of the German-American population, and from churches with a democratic polity. The author describes in detail the powerful reaction, psychological and spiritual, which stirred both lay and clerical leaders to adopt the lay emphasis.

The book is further significant as a model job of research. The author has been both fortunate and assiduous in working with a huge apparatus of primary sources, both published and manuscript. He has not merely read and listed them, but has revealed a remarkable facility in co-ordinating and interpreting his materials. His text is smooth and detailed, but it stands the test of reflecting the actual meaning of his sources. The book opens with a chapter on "Luther's Concept of Church Government." Here, too, the primary works of Luther are satisfactorily in evidence. The specialist would enjoy among the secondary directives and interpretations not only Diehm, but also Holl and Karl Mueller; the net results are probably adequate. Also the second and third chapters, on the European background of the Stephanite movement, have been developed from exclusively primary sources, and the secondary interpretations are meager; again a specialist might be happier in seeing such work utilized as that of Franz Schnabel and watching the author trace a broader background of German thought and life for his characters. Yet the author's method has the value of making his characters clear and of launching the investigation into the heart of the subject.

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A third significance of this volume lies in its by-products. There may be some unfortunate ones. Some readers will scan this volume for the sake of tickle of old scandal. Some will view the problems and weaknesses of the founders of the Church and deduce therefrom that the Church itself is hopelessly vulnerable — exactly what happened in 1839. This volume is too competent and sober a piece of historiography to share such a fate. But it does, nevertheless, provide some noteworthy accompaniments to its central theme. It is a timely contribution to the resistance which a church body owes the formation of a mythology about its origins. Such a mythology, which almost always glamorizes human leadership and oversimplifies the course of human events, actually detracts from the vision of the hand of God at work. This volume depicts the early figures of the Missouri Synod in an accurate way. But thereby it achieves an insight into the workings of a higher hand. The studies of the early character of individuals important in the history of Synod will be basic for the complete biographies which the Series hopes to produce. Individual uniquenesses of Missouri Synod thinking here are pictured in their very birth — the deference to the writings of Luther, the paradoxically high position of its ministry, the concentration on purity of doctrine.

Specialists in the history of religion on the American frontier, and in the story of the Missouri Synod in particular, may continue to confer with the author on individual points of interpretation. The craft of historiography as a whole, however, and his Church are indebted to Dr. Mundinger for his objectivity and thoroughness in this study. The counselors of his doctoral dissertation, of which this volume is a re-editing, expressed unusually warm tributes of appreciation for his technique. It remains for his fellow churchmen to acquire from him readiness and candor to view the facts of our history as they are and to apply them thoughtfully to their purpose.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

**The Theory of Preaching.** Dr. Austin Phelps. Abridged and revised by Faris Daniel Whitesell, Th. D. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 1947. \$2.50.

Although the original edition (1881) of this widely known tome on preaching contained 588 pages, Dr. Whitesell has succeeded remarkably well in cutting it down to 167 pages. The language and style of the author have been retained, and one does not sense readily that the present volume is an abridged edition. Dr. Phelps became instructor of homiletics at Andover Theological Seminary already at the early age of twenty-six and enjoyed national fame as an instructor and as a preacher. His *Theory of Preaching* bears witness of the soundness and thoroughness of his teaching; one is impressed throughout with the seriousness he attaches to his subject and the interest and clarity he maintains in presenting it. He believes firmly in the necessity of announcing theme and parts and insists that "the best culture for success in the pastoral office must not be subordinated to administrative and executive work both inside and outside the parish. [P. 150.] — The most effective method of giving well balanced interpretations is to make Scripture interpret Scripture. [Pp. 38—39.] — The pulpit's ministry of comfort often fails because



of knowledge of men. [P. 146.]—Every preacher needs that calm and earnest trust in God's truth to do its appointed work in the lives of men which will make him what the world calls a natural orator." (P. 140.)

WALTER E. BUSZIN

**Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine.** By John C. Wenger. Second edition, Revised and Enlarged. The Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa. 258 pages, 9×5¾. \$2.25.

In chapters well arranged and in language concise and easily understood the author presents the history and the doctrine of the Mennonite Church. Many large photographic reprints of persons, buildings, etc., are given. An appendix contains: "I. A Letter of Conrad Grebel to Vadian, II. A Letter of Menno Simons To a Troubled Christian, III. The Schleithem Confession of Faith, IV. The Dordrecht Confession of Faith, V. Mennonite Historiography, VI. A Brief English Bibliography of Mennonite History." The book also has an index of Scripture references used in the book, and a general index.

In the opening chapter the author answers the question: "Why did the founders of the Mennonite Church withdraw from the Roman Catholic Church?" (P. 1.) He says: "The answer is that they were determined by God's grace to get back to the Bible, back to the faith of the apostles of Christ, back to the faith of the church of the New Testament" (p. 4). However, the Mennonites also "were not satisfied with the Lutheran and Reformed Churches." Again we learn how Luther has been misunderstood. "Martin Luther," says the author of this book, "did a great work in inaugurating the Reformation, but he did not go all the way in simple obedience to the New Testament. Rather, he retained a state church, infant baptism, an elaborate ritual in worship, and an ineffective emphasis on holiness of life. He did not believe in religious toleration, freedom of conscience, Biblical nonresistance, or separation of church and state." (P. 15.) One wonders whether such men, attempting to tell what Luther taught, have really read and studied Luther's writings.

The author tells us that the Mennonites, or Anabaptists, "used the Bible not so much to erect a human system of theology as to redeem men from sin. In this sense they had a 'practical' attitude toward the Bible, making it function in the salvation and the sanctification of men, rather than placing much stress on systems of thought or entering into the speculative problems of theology" (P. 147). He also tells us that the Mennonites do not consider Baptism or the Lord's Supper to be means of grace. He says: "Baptism symbolizes the convert's faith in the power of Christ to cleanse from the guilt of sin. The Lord's Supper symbolizes faith in Christ as the One who has given His life for the redemption of the race. Feetwashing is a symbol of Christian brotherhood within the church." (P. 151.) The Mennonites "oppose the use of force in private life and also reject military service in every form" (P. 152). They also "refuse to do police service, or to be a magistrate. They frown even on jury service." (P. 153.) Nevertheless, they say that "the state is ordained of God to administer law and justice in a society of evildoers. In that sphere the state is absolutely necessary. Evil men must frequently be restrained by force. But that task is not assigned by God to



the saints" (P. 153). "Mennonites also teach the permanence of marriage, permitting a second union only when a life companion dies, and allowing formal separation only for adultery" (P. 159).

Concerning what may be Biblical in Mennonite theology, the author says in an opening paragraph in his chapter on *The Theology of the Mennonites*: "A number of monographs on Anabaptism have been written and several books on Bible doctrine have been issued by Mennonite publishers, but the *definitive Anabaptist-Mennonite theology is yet to appear*. [Although the Mennonite movement dates back to the sixteenth century. Italics our own.] All that can be attempted here is a brief summary of the main outlines of the theology of the Anabaptists and Mennonites. One handicap to a historical survey is the paucity of theological treatises from the leaders of the brotherhood, for most of their writings treat of practical questions of Christian living, or matters of church discipline, or isolated doctrinal points. This is true even of Menno Simons' *Works* which will be quoted extensively in this discussion. This lack of theological treatises is not without its significance; it indicates the fundamental fact that Anabaptism and Mennonitism are more Biblical than theological." (P. 137.)

Anyone who lives in a territory of Mennonites may need first-hand information concerning their history and doctrine; he can get it from this book.

J. H. C. FARRZ

**Christianity and Property.** Edited by Joseph F. Fletcher. The Westminster Press, Philadelphia. 221 pages, 5x8. \$2.50.

This book is a symposium, edited by the professor of Pastoral Theology at the Episcopal Theological School of Cambridge, in which a series of thinkers, originally addressing themselves to the Conference on Christian Social Teachings, review aspects of their question. Charles Lincoln Taylor, Jr., of the same school, contributes the chapter on "Old Testament Foundations"; Bishop Richard Stanley Merrill Emrich, "New Testament Teaching"; Edward Rochie Hardy, Jr., of the Berkeley Divinity School, "The Way of the Early Church"; Frederic Hastings Smyth, Superior of the Society of the Catholic Commonwealth, "The Middle Ages"; Paul Louis Lehmann, Associate Editor of the Westminster Press, "The Standpoint of the Reformation"; Vida Dutton Scudder, Emeritus Professor of English Literature at Wellesley College, "Anglican Thought on Property"; Charles Duell Kean, Rector of Grace Church, Kirkwood, Mo., "The Significance of Capitalism"; and the editor, "A Theological Perspective."

This book attacks problems from which our own constituency has been aloof. The co-operative method produces essays which are not uniform in value, of course, and which tend to be sometimes rather sententious. The chapters on Biblical teaching are brief and somewhat slanted in the direction of the thesis of the book. The chapter on the Reformation leans heavily toward the interpretation of Troeltsch. Most stimulating to this reviewer is the chapter contributed by Vida Scudder, to whom the participants have dedicated the book, and whose calm and warm appraisal of the history of thought in her own denomination might well be imitated by others.

A first reading of this material causes the casual reader to guess that he is dealing with the theorizing of theologians who



have pulled up safe economic moorings and are dallying with pink or red. However, the thought in this volume is much more honest and patient, and seeks genuinely to maintain the Christian basis. The central assumption of the book and of the movement which it represents is that while property is not antiscriptural, its use in modern society and the attitudes bred in men toward it are today subject to earnest misgivings. The Lutheran reader will appreciate the manifest effort of the writers to face the problems of their world and of their group squarely. While it will not do for a reader to assume that this is the only book which he should read or own on the subject, he will find this one pricking him with burrlike persistence.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

**The Origin of Paul's Religion.** By J. Gresham Machen. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. 329 pages, 8×5½. \$3.00.

**The Christian Faith in the Modern World.** Same author; same publishers. 258 pages, 8×5½. \$2.50.

**The Christian View of Man.** Same author; same publishers. 302 pages, 8×5½. \$2.50.

**Everyday Science for the Christian.** By Theodore L. Handrich. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 188 pages, 7½×5½. \$2.25.

**The Confessions of St. Augustine.** Condensed and edited by D. O. Fuller. Zondervan Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 137 pages, 8×5½. \$1.50.

It is, as the reviewer believes, a very fortunate circumstance for the cause of conservative Christianity that these three popular and valuable books of the late eminent Dr. Machen are again offered to the Christian world for study. *The Origin of Paul's Religion* appeared first in 1925 as the ninth series of the James Sprunt lectures at Union Theological Seminary (Virginia). At that time the origin of Paul's religion was widely and sometimes vehemently discussed by liberal and conservative groups of theologians. Liberals, especially in Germany (Baur, Harnack, Wrede, and others), rejecting the well-founded Christian tradition, described the religion which the great Apostle preached as a purely natural development out of Jewish and Hellenistic conflicts in the melting pot of Alexandrian philosophy and so as a sort of clever, but radical perversion of the real message of Jesus, which was essentially ethical. Very keenly and convincingly Machen demonstrates that this view is utterly at variance with the historical facts and an unwarranted figment of minds biased against conservative Christian truth. Since the books contain valuable historical and polemical elements that must ever be considered, Machen's analysis and apologetic will always be timely and important. *The Christian Faith in the Modern World* and *The Christian View of Man* show Machen's ability as a popular defender of the Christian faith against infidelity and as a competent dogmatist. In the first of the two volumes he treats the subjects of Scripture and God, while in the second he sets forth the doctrines of man and sin. Machen never denies his Calvinistic background and confession; yet the two volumes of sparkling radio addresses,



delivered in 1935 and 1936 respectively, deserve study by all Christians both on account of their approach and their content. His addresses on "Is the Bible the Word of God?" "Do We Believe in Inspiration?" "The Bible Versus Human Authority," and others are controversial and confessional gems that should be read again and again by ministers, teachers, and laymen. To pastors the books furnish valuable source material for popular and much-needed addresses.

*Everyday Science for the Christian* is an excellent apologetic that belongs into every school and Sunday school library and should be recommended especially to such students as are in danger of being misled by atheistic or agnostic propaganda. Mr. Handrich, in a truly scholarly, though not too difficult and abstruse a manner, discusses such topics as "Present-Day Opinion" (the Anti-Biblical Attitude, the Psychology of Evolutionistic 'Faith,' etc.), "God or Chance," "Matter and Reality," "The Age of the World," "Evolution," "The Flood Theory," "Why Accept the Bible?" "The 'Six Days' and Man's Fall," and "A Brief Biblical Philosophy of Life." Here is a book which should be brought to the attention of every student in our Christian day schools before their graduation. Incidentally, it contains enough scientific data to keep a well-read pastor thinking.

*The Confessions of St. Augustine*, in the condensed and edited form in which they are offered here, make profitable and perhaps also satisfactory reading for such as do not have the time to study this great work in its original and complete form. Properly speaking, the title "Confessions" is a misnomer, for the book contains very few confessions of the kind that one might expect of a man who in his pre-Christian period had delved so deeply into the prevalent vice of his time. It is rather a glorification of divine grace which drew this greatly gifted, but highly emotional and easily tempted man out of the degradation of unbelief and vice and converted a great sinner into a great saint and defender of Christianity. Since the book is so extremely subjective and devotional, it was well for the editor to leave out such portions as are not essential for the sequence of thought. But there is no omission of fundamentals, and the table of contents placed at the head of each chapter will greatly assist the reader in getting a good overview of what is essentially propounded. As a vindication of the divine power of the Word of God, the *Confessions of St. Augustine* belongs into the class of apologetic works which may fitly be described as immortal and with which therefore every student of Christian literature should be acquainted.

The five books here reviewed will do much to confirm the Christian reader in his glorious faith.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

**The Choirmaster's Workbook.** Dayton W. Nordin, editor. Augustana Book Concern, Rock Island, Ill. 1947. \$2.00.

A handy little volume which offers many excellent suggestions to choirmasters. While we cannot agree entirely with what Mr. Nordin says about pronunciation and phonetics on page 25, and regret that his recommendations of choral music are too conglomerate for a Lutheran church choir, we do agree wholeheartedly with the words of the Rev. O. V. Anderson, in whose short chapter



"Let the Children Sing" we read: "I believe many Protestant churches have greatly overdone this business of dividing up their congregations into interest or age groups . . . . It is my conviction that the average child can absorb far more of the congregational worship experience and be spiritually edified thereby than many people realize." (PP. 40—41.)

WALTER E. BUSZIN

### BOOKS RECEIVED

*From Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.:*

**Comfort and Hope.** Daily Devotions No. 79, October 28 to December 17, 1947. By Rev. Edwin L. Wilson. Single copy, 5 cents, postage extra; subscription for 8 consecutive numbers, 55 cents; 16 numbers, \$1.00. Bulk price: 48 cents per dozen, postage extra; \$3.50 per hundred, postage extra.

**Belehrung und Trost aus den Psalmen.** Andachten fuer die Zeit vom 28. Oktober bis zum 17. Dezember 1947. By Rev. A. H. Lange. Price same as above.

### Corrigendum

Prof. Victor Bartling of Concordia College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, draws our attention to a distressing error which appeared in the article reprinted from the *Classical Weekly* in our August number, pp. 617 ff. The author, Professor John A. Scott, is America's chief authority on Homer (and Homer at times nods). In the beginning of the article he implies that the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer contains the Greek perfect; a moment's reflection would have reminded him that ἀφίκαμεν is an aorist.

