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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, 3553 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis 18, Mo.

Resurgence of the Gospel. By T. A. Kantonen. The Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia. 232 pages, 5×7½. \$3.00.

The author pleads for "the resurgence of the Gospel," that is, for a recapture of the "real Luther and the reinterpretation of Luther's great principles for modern man." These principles are justification by faith, the sole authority of the Word, and the universal priesthood of believers.

The significance of this book lies in its "existential" approach. The author considers Luther one of the greatest "existential" thinkers of history (p. 35) and Luther's three principles as the best formulation "of an existential theology." To present Luther's theology as a "dynamic," existential theology is, in our opinion, both the strength and the weakness of the book. Existential theology as represented in Barthianism has brought us face to face with an entirely new battery of terminology: encounter, dialectics, crisis, dynamics, relevancy, *in actu*, existential moment. This terminology, though somewhat bewildering at first, can be made meaningful. Existential theology has indeed made a tremendous contribution to modern thinking, inasmuch as it vehemently attacked the barrenness of liberal theology and of dead orthodoxy and insists that theology must be personal and dynamic. The author shows that Luther was an "existential" thinker in the sense that for him religious facts were not only objectively true, but actually implied an "encounter." The reader will find many refreshing and challenging statements as he recaptures the dynamic of Luther's theology, and is again convinced that there is nothing static or quietistic about Luther's theology. But one must be careful lest one is carried away by the author's plea to "go beyond the dry and ponderous systems of our orthodox Scholasticism to Luther himself for guidance and inspiration" (p. 36). In making Luther an "existential thinker" the pendulum may swing all the way to Barthian dynamics and existentialism, with its one-sided emphasis of the subjective "encounter," the "event," the "crisis," and the resultant loss of objective truth. We fear that the author makes Luther's existentialism too "existential." The author states (p. 35 f.) that the Augustana's definition of God (There is one divine essence which is called and is God) "is not Luther's handwriting," because Luther always stood *coram Deo* and could therefore never speculate about God, but could only respond to God, because in Luther's language "God has no divinity where there is no faith" (p. 35 f.). While Luther's doctrine of God was "existential," he did not lose sight of—which for want of a better word we might call—the objective truth, and the author overlooks that Luther said: "*Augustana mea est*," because it is based on Luther's Schwabach and Marburg Articles (cp. St. Louis Edition, Vol. XVI, p. 564; XVII, p. 1940). The author rightly inveighs against an interpretation of Luther's doctrine of justification which is no more than an intellectual scheme. Luther would say, The story of the Prodigal Son must become *my* "encounter," an "event" for *me*. True, "justification is to be experienced in terms of individual regeneration"

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(p. 59). But this "experience" rests on an "objective" truth. My justification in the *hic et nunc* and the resultant tensions, expressed in Luther's pithy phrase *iustus simul peccator* (pp. 50-57), is indeed "existential," a personal experience. But we must also maintain the objective character of justification apart from sanctification. The question is not an either/or, but both/and. We must indeed "seek to avoid the spectator-attitude and to keep alive the 'existential' character of justification as an actual encounter" (p. 73). But in doing this we dare not lose sight of the factual, objective character of the Gospel. Apparently the author wishes to maintain the objective character (p. 72), but we feel that he does not stress it sufficiently, especially in view of the fact that he states that "faith not only rests upon the objective fact 'Christ died for us'; it is constantly renewed and energized by the Christ who lives within us" (p. 79). We therefore cannot agree with the author when he says that Melancthon and later dogmatists viewed justification as "a purely forensic affair, dealing not with men at all but only with the relation between God and man," and taking place "not in the human heart but in the judgment hall of God" (p. 58).

The existential approach of the author is evident particularly in the chapter on the Word, where the author pleads for a "dynamic inspiration," not a "*Deus dixit*," but a "*Deus loquens*" concept (p. 121). The author states that he does not agree completely with Luther's views on "canonics," but hopes that all will take seriously Luther's "appeal from the letter of the Bible to the Lord of the Bible" (p. 119). The author's contention is that Luther re-discovered the Christo-centric Bible and that this emphasis is needed in our day against a Fundamentalism which identifies the Word of God with the text of the Bible (p. 113). Does the author when speaking of the dynamics of the Bible have in mind what we generally call the means of grace, more specifically, the efficacy of the Word, or is he writing as an existentialist for whom the Bible has "the permanent possibility of an encounter with God" (p. 127) and for whom the Word of God is the Word only when it addresses *me*? We cannot understand his argumentation for the categorical denial of the inerrancy of Scriptures unless he has in mind that the Word of God has relevance only *in actu* and not *in statu*. He states: "Protestant theology has found itself in the dilemma of either starving on the empty husks of static intellectualism which its traditional orthodoxy inherited from a decadent scholasticism or else selling its birthright for the pottage of more up-to-date secular science and philosophy. Fundamentalism has followed the former course, modernism the latter. Neither is able to satisfy the reawakened spiritual hunger of our tragic day" (p. 127). The Fundamentalist view, if the author has in mind the Lutheran doctrine of verbal inspiration, is not correctly presented when he says: "The Word of God in its central and proper sense is not synonymous with the Christian proclamation, but with the written documents of the Old and New Testament now contained in canonical Scripture" (p. 130). This is a one-sided presentation. The view presented in the Formula of Concord (for example, p. 903, 55) and found in all Lutheran theology does not oppose a dynamic inspiration and favor a static intellectualism, but rather insists that the Word is always a dy-

namic, and in its "dynamics" convinces me that Christ as God-Man is my Redeemer, and in accepting Him as my Redeemer also creates faith in His Word, which is inerrantly presented to me in the written canon of the Old and New Testaments.

Secondly, the significance of the book lies in the fact that it is oriented in the recent Luther renaissance. It is the author's serious intention to acquaint American theology with the findings of the recent Luther studies. There is no doubt that the studies have added considerably to our understanding of the theology of Luther. However, it must be kept in mind that these studies deal primarily with the "young" Luther. To present Luther's real theology on the basis of his exegetical lectures from 1509—1518 does not present a complete picture. This is true especially if the doctrine of justification is based upon the "young" Luther. Adolf Hamel points out that Luther's doctrine of justification during the early period was almost identical with the "*sanative Rechtfertigung*" of Augustine, a progressive justification, in which justification and renewal are mingled, and which does not adequately present Luther's later views concerning the objective character of justification (*Der Junge Luther und Augustin*, Vol. I, 115 f.). Furthermore, the author subscribes to the theory advocated by many modern Luther students which holds that Luther's "original inclination was to correlate the written Word with the Old Testament and the spoken Word with the New" (p. 123). It is true that in some of his earlier sermons Luther makes statements which seem to indicate that he had little regard for the written New Testament and considered the oral proclamation as the distinctive medium of the Word and the Gospel. Such statements by Luther, however, must be read in their entire context and in view of Luther's antithesis to the Roman Catholic *opus operatum* theory. Again it is not an either/or, but both/and. One of the author's quotations from Luther to support the contention that the Reformer emphasized the oral proclamation almost to the exclusion of the written Word is misleading. Luther says: "*Dass man aber hat muessen Buecher schreiben, ist schon ein grosser Abbruch und ein Gebrechen des Geistes.*" The author translates, "But man's need to write books is a great injury, and it is a violation of the Spirit." According to the context Luther said, The New Testament had to be written because there was a lack of the Spirit, which resulted in the intrusion of errorists, and the protection of the flock required that the "sheep of Christ are led into the Scripture in order that the sheep might pasture themselves and be protected against the wolves, since their shepherds would not pasture nor protect them" (W. A., X, 627).

We regret that the author's zeal repeatedly prompts him to pour out the child with the bath water. For example, he states that "the doctrine of justification lost its dynamics by being removed from the realm of experience into the realm of purely conceptual analysis" (p. 58). Or, "Is not the deification of the Bible into something divinely inerrant a form of the docetic heresy, a denial of the human nature of the Word?" (p. 135). Or he speaks of the misfortune of the Reformation "that its great, living truths received their systematic formulation in an age when the basic thought-forms were supplied by a decadent Aristotelian scholasticism" and "the new wine of the re-discovered Gospel was poured

into the old skins of static intellectualism" (p. 36). Again, he says that American Lutheran theology "is still largely orientated in the seventeenth century and, adhering to the traditional scholastic methods, continues to busy itself with old distinctions and abstractions" (p. 37).

We wish to apply Goethe's words not only to Luther but to all the great Lutheran teachers:

Was du ererbt von deinen Vaetern hast,
Erwirb es, um es zu besitzen.

F. E. MAYER

The Work of the Holy Spirit. By Abraham Kuyper. Translated by Rev. H. De Vries. Reprinted by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 664 pages, 9×6. \$5.00.

The reviewer cordially recommends this well-known treatise on the work of the Holy Spirit, published by the renowned statesman and theologian Dr. Abraham Kuyper, in three parts, from 1888 to 1889, under the title *Het werk van den Heiligen Geest*, in serial form in his religious weekly *Heraut* ("The Herald") chiefly for lay readers, whom he wished to indoctrinate in orthodox Reformed theology against certain deviating trends in modern and ancient times. Influential in politics, Dr. Kuyper held various high offices in Holland and became prime minister in 1901 at the age of 64 years. In 1880 he founded at Amsterdam the Free University, where he lectured on various topics, but worked mainly in the field of systematic theology. A strict Calvinist, he founded the Reformed Free Church in 1886. Since 1872 he edited the *Standaard*, a daily newspaper, and since 1878 the *Heraut*, a politico-religious weekly. In 1898 he was the L. P. Stone lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Kuyper was the author of numerous political and theological works, noted both for depth and profundity, among them, in the field of apologetics: *Het modernisme, een Fata Morgana op christelijk gebied* ("Modernism, a Mirage in the Field of Christianity"), which appeared in 1871. In his widely read work *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, which in its English translation was first published in 1900 by Funk and Wagnalls Co., Dr. Kuyper purposes to present to his readers the entire work of the Holy Spirit in the realms of nature and grace. In Part (Volume) I of the work he represents the work of the Holy Spirit from Creation to the incarnation and redemption of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church. In Part (Volume) II he shows how the sinner is converted by the Holy Ghost from his natural state of sin and wrath to faith in Christ (original sin, regeneration, calling and repentance, justification, faith). Part (Volume) III pictures in great detail the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, in particular the love which He creates and sustains in the hearts of believers. Very fittingly the author closes the discussion with the *locus* of Prayer as the Christian's manifestation of faith and love. Though the writer was a strict Calvinist and as such often deviates from the Lutheran doctrine, Lutheran readers will, nevertheless, peruse his work with profit even though at times they find themselves compelled to disagree with what he says. Very helpful are the "Subject Index" and the "Textual Index," as also the "Explanatory Notes to the American Edition," the "Preface of the Author," and the "Introductory Note" by Prof.

B. B. Warfield, all of which contain much to explain Dr. Kuyper's great work. May the book incite many to return with renewed interest to the study of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost and His work as set forth in Holy Scripture.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

Reinhold Niebuhr: Prophet from America. By D. R. Davies. The Macmillan Company, New York. 1948. 102 pages, 5×7½. \$2.00.

Reinhold Niebuhr is supremely "dialectical," and therefore many people find it extremely difficult to grasp his position, though he has been hailed on both sides of the Atlantic as one of the outstanding thinkers of our generation. Pastors who are familiar with Niebuhr's writings will appreciate Davies' analysis of Niebuhr's position. Pastors who do not have time or inclination to plow through the manifold writings of Niebuhr will gain a very fine overview of Niebuhr's position. The author, a member of the Anglican Church and author of *Down Peacock's Feathers*, presents a very sympathetic study of Niebuhr. In the first chapter he traces the "theological" development of Niebuhr from the Evangelical manse and Yale Divinity School to his parish in the industrial section of Detroit, where his social theories crystallized. In the second and the third chapter the author shows that politically Niebuhr is a social revolutionary and theologically neo-orthodox, i. e., he disavowed Modernism's false anthropological optimism. Niebuhr is, of course, not primarily a theologian, but a social thinker. On the one hand, he has challenged the premise that man is inherently good, and, on the other hand, he seeks a solution for the tension of our entire social structure by dialectics. As a neo-orthodox he has remained an adherent of the liberal tradition, as is evident particularly from his description of the Kingdom of God. Davies brings sufficient material from the Gifford lectures (*The Nature and Destiny of Man*) to show that according to Niebuhr the eschatological concepts in the New Testament are to be understood symbolically. In the final analysis Niebuhr's theology remains a this-worldly religion.

There are a few minor errors, such as that Niebuhr was reared in Lutheranism, that he was born in Germany, whereas he was a member of the former Evangelical Synod and was born at Wright City, Mo. No reference is made to the fact that he graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in 1913. (He was on Eden's debating team in 1913, which met the Concordia Seminary team.)

F. E. MAYER

Let God Be God! An Interpretation of the Theology of Martin Luther. By Philip S. Watson. Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia. 203 pages, 8½×6. \$3.00.

The Muhlenberg Press deserves great praise for having published this new and instructive interpretation of Luther's theology by P. S. Watson, tutor in systematic theology and philosophy of religion, Handsworth College, Birmingham, England, a Methodist, who manifestly has made a careful study not only of Luther's works, but also of such eminent Luther students as Karl Holl and the various representatives of the Swedish Lundensian school. His chief interest lies in refuting the false views which men like

Adolf Harnack, Ernst Troeltsch, and others have spread about Luther and in showing what Luther really taught. His emphasis on God's sovereignty, indicated by the title of the book, which he believes to have been Luther's central theological thought, appears misplaced. Over against sinful man and his claim to merit, Luther indeed stressed God's sovereignty, especially in his outstanding work *De Servo Arbitrio*. But to Luther this emphasis on God's sovereignty was primarily Law preaching, which proud, rebellious man must know before he can be made to listen to the Gospel, the central message of the Bible. Luther's *Soli Deo Gloria* is due to God above all in view of Calvary's great redemption. Often, too, the writer speaks in terms of misleading obscurity, as, for example, when he says that "justification means for Luther the way in which God's will is done and His purposes of love are realized for and in and through many" (p. 64); or, when he avers that according to Luther "faith describes the human aspect of a relationship between man and God, where God is the all-determining factor" (*ibid.*). It is clear also that what Professor Watson says of Luther's "doctrine of the Word" is inadequate, if not downright wrong. He admits that "Luther at times equates the written words of the Bible with the Word of God himself," but then tries to show that "to Luther the Word of God is always fundamentally Christ even when he does not explicitly say so" (p. 152). In his *Christliche Dogmatik* Dr. Pieper demonstrates almost *ad nauseam* how wrong this view of modern liberal theologians is. So the book requires careful, judicious reading. But in the main the author shows a fine insight into Luther's theology and proves that he has well grasped its fundamentals, as, for example, Luther's conception of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, man's helplessness and God's free salvation through faith in Christ. Very true also is the writer's claim that "Luther came to denounce the Pope as Antichrist because of the doctrine of merit which the Papacy emphasizes" (p. 96). He is right, too, when he demonstrates that Luther did not regard the strict letter of the Decalog as binding for Christians (p. 111). His refutations of the misrepresentations of Harnack and Troeltsch are very convincing. The five chapters in the book bear the following titles: "Luther as a Theologian"; "The Motif of Luther's Thought"; "The Revelation of God"; "The Theology of the Cross"; "The Doctrine of the Word." The whole discussion is well documented, and the translations of Luther are accurate and excellent. May the book induce many to a new and thorough study of Luther's theology.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

The Seven Ways of Sorrow. By Alvin E. Wagner and W. G. Polack. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 1948. 115 pages, 8×5¼. \$1.50, net.

This book of Lenten sermons offers two series. The first, of seven sermons, is prepared by the Rev. Alvin E. Wagner of North Hollywood, Calif., formerly of Forest Park, Ill., and Panama. They are a treatment of the Via Dolorosa. Pastor Wagner handles a crisp and direct style. He arrives at a clean and emphatic doctrinal content. Some of the links between the scenes of the Passion and the application to the hearer are unexpected and should be stimulating to the preacher who is seeking to revive the bearing

of the age-old story upon his own imagination and faith. Instances are the parallel between the mansion of Caiaphas and the Last Judgment; Christ an unwanted prisoner and an unwanted Savior; the arrival at Golgotha and our arrival in eternity. The author is skillful in setting forth sharp concepts and in arriving at genuine climaxes of mood. — The second series comprises eight brief meditations on great Lenten hymns and is contributed by Dr. W. G. Polack, professor of church history and hymnology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo. Texts are provided for each sermon, in addition to the hymn. The hymns are: "A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth"; "Rock of Ages"; "There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood"; "Upon the Cross Extended"; "Just as I Am, Without One Plea"; "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"; "Soul, Adorn Thyself with Gladness"; and "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded." The author is careful to stress the doctrinal values. He utilizes a minimum of the historical background or association of the hymn.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

When Thy Face I See. By Armin C. Oldsen. Ernst Kaufmann, Inc., New York. 8×5½, 131 pages. \$2.25.

Pastor Oldsen developed these sermons for his congregation at Valparaiso, Ind., and dedicates the book to the "members and student-members" of that church. His method is to ponder aspects of the Savior's character and purpose, particularly in the Passion, by thinking of Him visually. He refers to specific works of art to make his point, but does not suspend his remarks from specific paintings. The method is freshly handled, and the doctrines of redemption and regeneration stand forth adequately.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

A Child's Garden of Prayer. Compiled and Adapted by H. W. Gockel and E. J. Saleska. Illustrated by Otto Keisker. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 1948. 6¾×8¼, 40 pages. \$2.00.

The theology of the prayers in this booklet is not of the profundity that would seem to warrant a review in a professional journal. Nevertheless it is significant enough to have mention here. The booklet combines a choice of prayers covering the chief interests and activities of children, including churchgoing, Christian charity, and simple reverence to God. The setting of these prayers is an unusually glowing layout of a variety of art forms which should make the book a primary and major religious experience for thousands of children. It will do for our children what some of the rich productions of German art did for those of three generations ago.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

The Secret of Suffering. By Rolf L. Veenstra. W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich. 5¼×7½, 138 pages. \$2.00.

On the whole we concur with the author in his presentation of his subject, but we are obliged to differ with him in several respects. Christ's descent into hell cannot be considered a part of His suffering, and some of the author's speculations about everlasting life as found in chapter six are untenable. Nor do we feel

that he actually holds that "all men believe in God," but that he merely meant to say that there are no actual atheists in this world, which is also debatable. In the main this is a very acceptable and Scriptural discussion of the problem of suffering. O. E. SOHN

Epistle to White Christians. By Fred D. Wentzel. The Christian Education Press, 1505 Race St., Philadelphia, Pa. 96 pages, 5×7½. \$1.50.

Here is a highly emotional, all-out appeal for settlement of the race problems by total amalgamation, including intermarriage, and which presents the case in a ringing and challenging fashion that seems to have much in its favor. Yet when one, for instance, recalls the article on the "Church and Caste" by the sainted missionary A. J. Lutz (C. T. M., 1948, 679 f.), in which the author relates the experiences of our missionaries in India in trying to work out a solution of a similar problem, one is not so sure that the author has the answer, plausible though the argumentation seems to be. Christian love still has to find the way.

O. E. SOHN

In Training. A Guide to the Preparation of the Missionary. By Rowland Hogben. Edited by the Rev. A. T. Houghton, M. A. Published by The Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. 64 East Lake Street, Chicago. 188 pages, 5½×7½. \$2.25.

Rowland Hogben served many years as a missionary and then devoted his life to training others for overseas mission service. He met his death in an accident on the Burma Road while taking a number of new recruits into China in 1942. He planned this book and wrote some of the chapters. Mr. Houghton and other contributors then completed the book according to the original design. It shows the Scriptural reasons for entering a mission career and then also how the missionary candidate should prepare for this calling. They should study history of missions so that "mistakes of the past need not be repeated," they should study comparative religions so that they may the better show that "Christ, with the faith that centers in Him, stands alone and unique." The book rings true to the Scriptures and will be found very useful for all students of methods in mission work, not only for foreign fields, but also for home fields. E. C. ZIMMERMANN

BOOKS RECEIVED

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

Portals of Prayer No. 89. — He Loved Even Me. Daily Devotions from Feb. 24 to April 16, 1949. By Rev. Carl W. Berner. 10 cents each, postpaid.

Andachtsbuechlein No. 89. — Sonntagsklaenge No. 3. Vom 24. Februar bis zum 17. April. — By Dr. H. M. Zorn. 10 cents each, postpaid.

From Fleming H. Revell Company, N. Y.:

How to Live Effectively. By J. Richard Sneed, D. D. 5¼×7½, 112 pages. \$1.50.