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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 South Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis 18, Missouri.

HERE I STAND. A Life of Martin Luther. Roland H. Bainton. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press. New York-Nashville. 422 pages. \$4.75.

This is a book which everyone interested in Luther's life and the history of the Reformation will read with delight. It is not a textbook—not a book for the beginner. The author does not take you by the hand and lead you, step by step, over the way Luther traveled; it is rather a large sketch by one who has lived in the land so long and knows it so well that the really significant and important points stand out and are given their proper evaluation. It therefore presupposes some knowledge of the history of Luther and of the times. The result is that numerous allusions, references, etc., will not carry their full value to the casual reader; e.g., p. 126: "Erasmus scoffed at those who to forefend the fiends trusted to a garment incapable of killing lice." Moreover, it is written in terse, brief style—far more information offered in the book than the number of pages would seem to indicate. The illustrations are of special value—mostly cartoons widely spread at the time; and the author wisely uses them to point out public sentiment prevailing.

Bainton is Titus Street Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Yale Divinity School. He is an active member of the Society of Friends, but was ordained a minister of the Congregational Church. He is one of our country's leading specialists in Reformation history. He knows all the arguments that have been dragged into the field against Luther, and he takes issue with them—sometimes, just in passing, in a well-placed and well-formed sentence, totally and satisfactorily demolishing them. True, at times the author's love for brief, "catchy" phrases runs away with him; p. 254, in the discussion of Luther's controversy with Erasmus on free will: "Erasmus would rather limit the power of God than forfeit the goodness; Luther the reverse."—Luther would do neither.

Bainton's interest is that of the honest historian: Tell the facts truthfully, whether you like them or not.—His discussion of the Peasants' War and Luther's part in it, of the beginning of the Lutheran State Church—great touchstones for the fairness of a non-Lutheran writer!—are eminently fair and just. Only rarely does the author's own opinion appear—I think in what Mr. Bainton likes to call "unguarded moments" in Luther, e.g., p. 142: The *figment* of an implicit faith in the baby comparable to the faith of a man in sleep; p. 258: "One wonders whether Scripture was really determinative"—the author's only slighting remark

on Luther's insistence on the Real Presence at Marburg. Pp. 341 ff. and 375 ff. indicate a warm spot in the author's heart for the Anabaptists; I do not think that Thomas Muenzer got quite the "raw deal" that is claimed in the text. Nevertheless, the author gives a fine testimony to Luther in this connection, p. 378. The discussion of Luther's Theses, p. 79 ff., is fine—stressing Luther's chief objection: that the people were being taught a false way of salvation, that "huckstering" way of buying salvation through indulgences.—P. 216: "It is futile to inquire whether Luther was a democrat, aristocrat, autocrat, or anything else. Religion was for him the chief end of man and all else peripheral." I wholeheartedly support that against the usual claim of Calvinistic writers that Luther interfered with the development of democracy among the German people. The chapter on Luther's marriage and family life is touching. On Luther's vulgar language—another point that Denifle, Grisar, and Co., and some Protestant authors who should know better, like to harp upon!—Bainton has one paragraph, p. 297: "Luther delighted less in muck than many of the literary men of his age; but if he did indulge, he excelled in this as in every other area of speech. The volume of coarseness, however, in his total output is slight. Detractors have sifted from the pitchblende of his ninety tomes a few pages of radioactive vulgarity. But there are whole volumes which contain nothing more offensive than a quotation from the Apostle Paul, who 'suffered the loss of all things' and counted them but dung, that he might win Christ."

I am sorry that I cannot stop here; but in one point the author has been utterly unable to understand Luther, a point so vital that it must be mentioned. The section on Luther's "Enlightenment"—Bainton calls it "The Evangelical Experience," pp. 60—66—cites Luther's own words on the "*Türmerlebnis*"—how he had come to hate the expression "the justice of God," so often used by St. Paul, "because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust" and he knew by bitter experience that he could never satisfy this justice of God; how then, at the hand of Rom. 1:17, he had realized that this justice, or righteousness of God (which he later on so significantly and so consistently translated "*die Gerechtigkeit, die vor Gott gilt*"), is not a righteousness which we have or produce, but a foreign righteousness (the perfect righteousness of Christ) which God imputes to us through faith. Bainton quite evidently does not agree. He says that the only explanation of Christ's "utter desolation" on the Cross "must be that Christ took to himself the iniquity of us all. He who was without sin for our sakes became sin and so identified himself with us as to participate in our alienation." But what does that mean for us? God "has found the reconciliation in the pangs of bitter death. It is not that the Son by his sacrifice has placated the irate Father; it is not primarily that the Master by His self-abandoning goodness has made up for our deficiency. It is that in some inexplicable way, in the utter desolation of the forsaken Christ, God was

able to reconcile the world to himself." "Justification is a process of the sort which sometimes takes place if the judge suspends the sentence, places the prisoner on parole, expresses confidence and personal interest in him, and thereby instills such resolve that the man is reclaimed and justice itself ultimately better conserved than by the exaction of a pound of flesh. Similarly the moral improvement issuing from the Christian experience of regeneration, even though it falls far short of perfection, yet can be regarded as a vindication of the justice of God." "For the whole process of being made new Luther took over from Paul the terminology of 'justification by faith.'" In the light of this I can understand how the author later (p.248) can speak of "justification by faith *properly guarded* as at Trent." No, Luther understood St. Paul much better; God, purely by grace, has reconciled the world unto Himself by the vicarious substitutional life, suffering, and death of His Son, and has justified us by not imputing our sins to us, but through faith imputing to us the perfect righteousness of our Savior, Jesus Christ. That was Luther's teaching; that is the true Christian faith; that is the faith by which we all, including the author of this book, must be saved.

THEO. HOYER

CHURCH AND STATE IN THE UNITED STATES. Historical Development and Contemporary Problems of Religious Freedom under the Constitution. By Anson Phelps Stokes. Harper and Brothers, New York, 1950. 3 vols., 936 pages, 799 pages, 1,042 pages. \$25.00.

Students of American church history are generally agreed that one of the most significant contributions of American Christianity to Christian thought is its doctrine of the separation of Church and State. In this judgment they are joined by students of American constitutional history, who see in the American view of separation a unique experiment aimed at solving the ancient and thorny problem of how best to relate the Christian community to the political community around it.

Recent developments in both the ecclesiastical and the political sphere have accentuated the need for a restudy of the problem of Church and State. The beginnings of such a restudy are before us in the definitive work of Stokes on *Church and State in the United States*. Thorough in its method and compendious in its scope, Stokes' book seems destined to be standard in its field for a long time to come. The breadth of the work is such that it exceeds the scholarly competence of most reviewers, including this one, to pass authoritative judgment on all the data which Stokes presents.

The general thesis of the book may be briefly stated as follows: Though there have been many significant deviations in both directions, the general pattern of Church-State relations in the United States may be characterized as one of co-operation without identification. Stokes himself terms it "friendly or co-operative Church-State separation" (I, xlviii) and summarizes: "It is perhaps fair to say that leaving out some of the Oriental

Churches and some of the Lutheran and other Churches on the continent under Barthian influence, there are relatively few important modern Churches, or Church leaders, or Christian statesmen that do not believe it essential that the Church not only exist, but that it *influence* the State ethically; yet outside the Roman Catholic Church, where there is some difference of opinion, there are no Churches which feel with the medieval theologians that the Church should *control* the State" (III, 711; italics his).

To support this thesis, Stokes adduces much material from American history, legal and constitutional, religious and ecclesiastical. Although he believes that even in the United States "Lutherans have continued their European tradition of aloofness from any active participation as churchmen in the affairs of State" (I, 767), he nevertheless praises the Lutheran system of elementary education and asserts that "the dominant note of distinctive Lutheran educational policy in this country has been given by the Missouri Synod" (II, 675). This apparent inconsistency is related to his interpretation of Luther's stand on religious liberty: "the seeds of liberty were in some of Luther's major teachings, although certainly not in all of his practices" (I, 105) — a judgment in which, interestingly enough, Franz Pieper concurs (*Dogmatik*, III, 215, note 786).

In common with other Lutherans this reviewer would have appreciated a clearer statement from the author on the theological relation between the two kingdoms. There is an implicit tendency in Stokes to regard the American answer to Church-State relations as ultimate regardless of the theological considerations involved. But it was not his purpose to articulate a theology of Church-State relations. He has sought, rather, to document the tortuous history of those relations in America. This he has done in a masterly fashion.

JAROSLAV PELIKAN

DER SINN DER GESCHICHTE. By Hans Juergen Baden. Friedrich Wittig Verlag, Hamburg, 1948. 346 pages, 4½×7. \$2.50.

Perhaps the choice of the publisher is a commentary on the character of this book. The Friedrich Wittig Verlag deserves more than merely passing notice. Though Friedrich Wittig himself does not refer to his firm as a Christian publishing house, he aims to make it just that. His efforts to produce Christian literature have been recognized by Helmut Lindemann in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, Gelsenkirchen, Ruhr Verlag, Vol. 76, pp. 696—698. In support of his reference to the Friedrich Wittig Verlag as a Christian publishing house, Lindemann cites the fact that among other Christian writings it has also published the works of Hans Juergen Baden.

The book *Der Sinn der Geschichte* is one of half a dozen works that have been published by the author. In this volume he attempts to show how utterly futile it is to undertake the writing of history without an adequate philosophy of history. He decries the hero worship of past ages and of more recent times, particularly that of present-day totalitarianism.

He regards God as the Author of history. The historian who departs from God as the Fountainhead of history, according to Hans Juergen Baden, describes mere shadows and phantoms. But he is still more specific. To him Jesus Christ is the very Center of history, because in Him God has revealed Himself, "for in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Therefore he concludes that for the believer the meaning of history can find expression only with and through the appearance of Christ.

L. W. SPITZ

THE MAN OF SORROWS. By Albert T. W. Steinhäuser. Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1951. 5½×8. 293 pages. \$2.50.

This book, in a new and tastefully published edition, is a devotional manual for Passiontide. The pattern follows the familiar story of Holy Week in Jerusalem and Bethany and the Way of Sorrows to the Cross. A simple devotion contemplating the respective portion of the Passion narrative is amplified by special Collects and hymns from the devotional literature of the ages. The readings are timed to extend from Ash Wednesday to Easter Eve. Frequently the author operates with familiar language from Scripture and catechism, and in general the book is admirable for shaping the personal worship and concentration upon the Cross of pastors and people during Lent.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

BEDSIDE DEVOTIONS. No. 31. By Alfred Doerffler. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, 1950. Set of 31 devotions, loose leaf, 4¼×6¼. 25 cents net, postpaid.

A beautiful pastoral spirit prevails in each of these bedside devotions. Pastors can well use and distribute these individual leaflets while making their sickcalls. Each leaflet contains a brief meditation based on a Bible passage and also a prayer. The leaflets are attractive also from the standpoint of appearance.

WALTER E. BUSZIN

WHEN LOVED ONES ARE CALLED HOME. By Herbert H. Wernecke. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids 6, Mich. 52 pages. 8¼×5¼. \$.60 each; \$6.00 dozen.

An excellent little gift book intended as a fountain of comfort and hope for the bereaved. In a direct and simple manner the author gathers together and discusses the choicest gems of Scripture truth which depicts the victory of the Christian over death and the grave, all this in the light of his own recent bereavement. Always with these meditations there is a wealth of pertinent verse to crystallize the thought. We are not sure just what the author believes concerning the communion of saints, nor do we subscribe to his Reformed view of Holy Communion. Aside from that, it is a most refreshing fountain of comfort for those who have recently stood at the grave of a loved one.

O. E. SOHN