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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.

GOD REMEMBERS. A Study of the Book of Zechariah. By Charles L. Feinberg. Van Kampen Press, Wheaton, Ill. 1950. 283 pages. 5½×7¾. \$3.00.

A commentary on the book of Zechariah, which Luther called "Der Ausbund der Propheten," is indeed welcome.

It is also gratifying to note that "the author maintains throughout the orthodox, traditional viewpoint of the Bible" (p. vii). This is borne out in his isagogical as well as in his exegetical approach. He does not agree with the critical division of the authorship of the book; he insists that "this Angel of Jehovah is none other than the preincarnate Christ" (p. 29).

An additional interesting feature of the book is the fact that it is written by a Jewish author who has espoused Christianity and is now professor of Old Testament in Los Angeles Bible Theological Seminary.

Disappointing is the writer's avowed viewpoint of prophecy as stated frankly in the preface: "His interpretation of Holy Writ is the premillennial and dispensational" (p. vii). If the book of Zechariah is the "Apocalypse of the Old Testament," then this aberration will not enter merely as an occasional marginal reference, but must effect the core of the meaning of the book, and it does.

WALTER R. ROEHRS

DIE CHRISTLICHE WAHRHEIT. Von Paul Althaus. Two volumes, 892 pages, 6×9. Second edition, 1949. C. Bertelmann Verlag, Guetersloh. Preis H1. D. M. 27.

It has been suggested that Althaus' two-volume dogmatics be translated into English and be used as a textbook in Lutheran theological seminaries. By and large Althaus conforms to the pattern which most Lutheran dogmatists observe in organizing their material. An especially excellent feature is Althaus' critical evaluation of all significant trends in the history of dogma, particularly the contemporary theology of Roman dogmatists, of liberal theologians, and of the dialecticians. There are no references to American theologians, except to Paul Tillich and Otto Piper, who were established in Germany prior to their transfer to America. Althaus' presentation is gripping and challenging. His frequent use of striking epigrams, his mastery of the German language, and above all the accumulated wealth of dogmatical material make the reading and study of Althaus a real delight.

But in many sections—in fact, basically all through the two volumes

—there is frequently more problematics than dogmatics. This is evident particularly in the first volume of 350 pages devoted exclusively to Prolegomena. Althaus states that the purpose of dogmatics is to establish and unfold the Christian truth in its relevance for today. To do this the dogmatician must examine God's revelation as it reaches us today in the Apostolic witness and through the Church. (I, 19.) This reviewer understands Althaus to say that the task of dogmatics is to examine the "christliche Wahrheit," the body of truth which is handed down in the Biblical witness, exegesis, church history, and history of dogma, and ultimately in the contemporary Church's proclamation. The second task of dogmatics is to determine what in this tradition is essential and constructive and what is variable and transient. This approach to dogmatics would place Althaus more definitely into the Schleiermacher-Frank tradition than he probably realizes. Schleiermacher sought religious truth in the individual's experience of God; Frank in the confessional statements of the Church, especially the Lutheran Confessions; Althaus in the Scriptures and in the current proclamation in line with the fine-sounding phrase "Man muss auf die Brüeder hören."

In the first volume (almost 300 pages) Althaus discusses the essence of revelation and faith. He states: The Church dares to witness concerning God because God has witnessed and still witnesses concerning Himself; the Church dares to speak of God because God has spoken and still speaks (p. 25). This encounter between God and man is revelation, both as *Ur-offenbarung* and *Heilsoffenbarung*. Althaus devotes considerable space to *Ur-offenbarung*, i. e., the natural knowledge of God, and comes to grips with the many modern aberrations among Roman Catholics from Thomas Aquinas to M. Schmaus, from the orthodox Lutherans to the modern era, and especially with the Herrmann-Barth-Bultmann tradition. We found Althaus' critique of Barth's virtual denial of the natural knowledge very helpful, especially the contention that Barth's position leads to a hopeless mingling of Law and Gospel (pp. 68 ff.). Althaus, as one would expect from his orientation, operates very largely with the findings of Comparative Religions, but he utilizes this material in such a way that the natural man's realization of his responsibility to the "unknown God" is clearly emphasized and that in this experience of *Deus absconditus* the natural man is filled with anxiety (*Angst*). Althaus states that man has an inkling of the high purpose for which he was created and is filled with nostalgia (*Heimweh*) for it. But his nostalgia is no guarantee that he will return home (p. 85). The natural knowledge of God is the revelation of the unrevealed God. "Es ist ein rätselhaft-doppeltes Antlitz, das Gott uns zukehrt. Was will er zuletzt mit uns? Er macht uns lebendig und tötet uns. Er gibt uns die hohen Normen der Wahrheit, Gerechtigkeit, Gemeinschaft, Schönheit ins Herz und lässt uns hungern und dürsten nach ihrer Verwirklichung ohne Erfüllung. Er berührt uns mit seinem Leben und

schlieszt uns von Ihm aus. Er wirft uns das Heimweh in die Seele und hält uns die Heimat verschlossen. Er adelt uns durch Gebot und Berufung — und lässt uns doch an ihnen unrettbar schuldig werden und seinem Gerichte verfallen. *Quid Deus velit erga nos?* Mit dieser offenen Frage hat Luther die Grenze und Not der 'natürlichen' Erkenntnis Gottes bestimmt." (P. 110f.) Only one question: To what extent have elements of the Christian revelation influenced Althaus in his description of the *Ur-Offenbarung*, and how much is mere conjecture? Here, as in every phase of Christian doctrine, it is important that the dogmatician remain within the clear revelation of God.

Althaus presents *Heilsoffenbarung* under the following four headings: The message to Israel as preparatory for the Gospel; God's redemptive act in Christ; Holy Scripture as the witness to, and bearer of, the revelation; the Church's appropriation of the Gospel in its Confessions and dogmatical treatises. Althaus defines the Gospel as Christ's divinely established authority (*Vollmacht*) to redeem men from their basic trouble. Under the aspect of *Ur-offenbarung*, man's basic problem is the paradox of his existence; a constant *Haben und Entbehren*, freedom and bondage, man's lordship and slavery, the desire for the ethically good and the constant failure to meet it, the unstilled hunger for the true life, a hunger which God has kindled but does not satisfy. This is man's real problem, his *Daseinsnot*. According to Althaus, man's problem is not hamartiological, not sin-centered, as though sin were the cause, the root, and the basis of our *Daseinsnot* and the conquest of sin therefore the end of our problems. That is too simple in the light of *Ur-offenbarung*, i. e., the revelation of human paradoxes. Christ must free us not primarily from our sin, but from the paradoxes of and in our very existence. The Gospel is therefore the message that Christ has received authority (*Vollmacht*) to free us from our entire *Daseinsnot*, by solving and thus removing the paradoxes of our existence. God is reconciled, inasmuch as He no longer confronts me in paradoxes and no longer appears as "two-faced" (manifesting both wrath and love), but comes in love only. In His full authority Christ has led us into fellowship with the Father. We have full redemption, and the Kingdom of God has come. In Christ humanity enters the glory of the new and true life. Man no longer merely exists, now he lives. (Pp. 128 to 130.)

Here we find Althaus' formal and material principle. According to his formal principle, not Scripture, but the "Gospel" is the *principium cognoscendi*. Althaus sees in the Bible only one of the forms — though the most important — in which the Gospel comes to us. In discussing the Bible, Althaus makes many excellent statements, but vitiates these by making many concessions to Liberalism. "The Christmas story is not a myth; it is poetry and expresses symbolically the mystery of what occurred in the birth of Jesus. . . . The story of the malefactor, though a later legendary addition,

enal. This book is remarkably comprehensive in its discussion of evangelistic method—mass and consultation, adult and children, group and individual. But most unique and welcome is its patient building on a theological foundation. Canon Green employs as his definition of evangelism that given by the Archbishop's Committee of Inquiry on the Evangelistic Work of the Church in 1918: "To evangelize is so to present Christ Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church" (p. 6). The author believes that evangelism should work for conversion; that many within the church are not in the full sense of the term converted; that particularly the unchurched world suffers from an apathy toward God that makes evangelism in our time unusually difficult; and that a vigorous spiritual life in the individual Christian in his church is basic for the task of reaching out toward the unconverted. While known in America as an evangelist in metropolitan mass campaigns, Canon Green devotes most space in his book to the operations of the minister in his parish, his community, and his personal counseling with individuals. He dodges no questions, including the difficult ones about Baptism and Holy Communion, and remains humble in suggesting his own solutions. A recurrent theme of the book, and the subject of one of the appendices, is the consideration of training the laity for evangelistic work. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the National Lutheran Council have sought to re-emphasize evangelism in our time, and this contribution from overseas will prove genuinely helpful.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

LOGIC FOR LIVING. LECTURES OF 1921—22. By Henry Horace Williams. Edited by Jane Ross Hammer. Philosophical Library, New York, 1951. 281 pages. \$3.75.

This book is a reconstruction by appreciative students of the classroom method employed by Henry Horace Williams, who for many years taught logic and philosophy at the University of North Carolina. Though covering a wide range of thought, the discussions suggest Mr. Williams' conscious and consistent efforts to apply logical analysis to current and relevant problems of life. The discussions are in places highly stimulating. The most lively impression which stays with the reader is that Mr. Williams must have been a kind of *Socrates redivivus* except that concealed pride is conspicuously absent in Mr. Williams' dealings with students.

PAUL M. BRETSCHER

A PHILOSOPHY OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. By Edward John Carnell. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1952. 523 pages. \$6.00.

The author examines with remarkable detachedness and objectivity some of the most significant currents of modern thought which in some way or other compete with the Christian way of life. Following an analysis of

such very earthen philosophies as hedonism and materialism of the Communist brand, the author reviews critically such forms of thought which make a bid for the higher reaches of man and are therefore less easily recognizable as inadequate interpretations of the meaning and purpose of life. Throughout the chapters, he reveals a thorough acquaintance with modern thought patterns and metaphysical problems. At the same time he also gives evidence that he has clearly grasped the fundamentals of the Christian faith. He is to be congratulated on having ventured forth to meet some of the dragons of unbelief and skepticism, to have exposed their vulnerability, and to have slain them with the sword of the Spirit. We have one criticism: some chapters seem to us unnecessarily profuse and prolix. On second thought, perhaps philosophers need to be that way.

PAUL M. BRETSCHER

CONFUCIUS AND CHRIST. A Christian estimate of Confucius. By Leo Sherley-Price, Chaplain, Royal Navy. The Philosophical Library, New York, 1951. 248 pages. \$4.75.

The thesis of this book represents the erroneous view current since the second century that the religious and ethical thoughts of such pagan sages as Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno are to a large extent a *praeparatio evangelii*. Accordingly the purpose of this book is "Firstly, to present Confucius to the reader in such a way that he can make a fair estimate of the value and relevance of his teachings. And, secondly, to show that natural philosophy has a vital and important part to play in everyday life, but that all our aspirations towards truth and virtue are largely impotent and frustrated unless supported by a sound metaphysical foundation. This, in the Christian view, had been provided for us by Jesus Christ in His revelation of 'the inexhaustible mystery of the Being of God.'"

Though the theological views elsewhere expressed by the author, who appears to be a High Anglican, do not always comport with Scripture, he unequivocally confesses his faith in the God-Man Jesus Christ, who became incarnate and who by His obedience unto death brought about an atonement for all mankind. It is genuinely refreshing to note how often the author reverts to this most important doctrine of Scripture.

The writer discusses the following aspects of the teachings of Confucius: God in the philosophy of Confucius; the world of spirits and the cult of ancestors; the family and filial piety; the gentleman or *Chun-Tzu*; Virtue (*Jen*); the purpose of education; the doctrine of the mean; the use of music; right behavior (*Li*); the rectification of names.

The book is well written. The organization of the material enables one to gain perspective of the basic teachings of Confucius. Considering that it is possible to read and inwardly digest the 248 pages of this book within the span of two short hours, the price of the book seems outrageously high.

PAUL M. BRETSCHER