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Book Review. - Literatur

J. T. Mueller

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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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.

THE FORMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. By H. F. D. Sparks. Philological Library, New York. 156 pages, with bibliography and an index of references to the Scriptures. \$3.00.

This book is by a professor of theology in the University of Birmingham, England. It purposes to place the New Testament writings into their historical context and to relate them to the milieu of religious life and thought in which they were written. The author is concerned to show that the New Testament is not only a book which the Church possesses but a volume which the Church itself produced. To that end he devotes this particular volume to a discussion of each of the books of the New Testament in its specific setting, as far as this can be determined. His approach is historical. He takes as his starting point the origin, growth, development of the early Church and then tries to fit the books of the New Testament into their appropriate places in this particular story.

The author promises more than he actually produces. Much of what he writes has already been done in other connections by other people. There is nothing particularly new about the content of this particular volume. Its usefulness lies in the fact that the author is able within a very short space to present the best results of present-day scholarship. It can be a very useful volume to pastors in that sense.

The first chapter of the book, although sketchy, can be helpful in realizing how at the beginning of His ministry Jesus adjusted Himself to the terminology of religious hope as this was used in the age in which He lived. The author makes use of a number of quotations from the book of Enoch to show how a hope in the Messiah had developed in the age between the two Testaments. He points out that it is in this literature that the titles "the Son of David," "the Elect One," "the Son of Man" developed. For an understanding of the New Testament this is of extreme importance.

Professor Sparks does not accept the Ephesian theory on the letters of captivity. He is fair enough to admit much of the argument for Ephesus as the locale for writing Colossians, Philipians, and Philemon. However, he sides with Rome in the last analysis.

Ephesians is a problem to him, as it is to any scholar of today. In the last paragraph he decides that it is not a Pauline letter, although he is very hesitant to make such a statement. Among the many suggestions as to who the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews might have been

he adds one already made by A. Harnack and R. Harris. Professor Sparks suggests that it might have been the converted Jewess Priscilla. This is what he has to say on that point: "Hebrews exhibits several traces of the feminine point of view; e. g., the reference to the 'women' who 'receive their dead by a resurrection'; and, anyway, we should not exclude the possibility that we owe at least one of the New Testament writings to a 'sister' rather than a 'brother!'" (P. 83.) His final statement on the problem of the authorship of Hebrews is a repetition of the remark made by Origen many centuries ago, "But who, in fact, did write the Epistle, God knows" (p. 84).

The author of this volume spends a good bit of time and effort on the synoptic problem, as any man must today who reckons with Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He submits a number of reasons for the existence of written sources used by the Synoptics. And yet he is careful enough in his statements to say, on page 99: "Whether there be one 'Q' or several, though, is for our present purpose of small importance."

On the relation between Second Peter and the Book of Jude the author chooses the alternative that Second Peter is quoting Jude. He puts the authorship of Jude somewhere between the years 60 and 85. Of Second Peter he says (p. 136): "If there is one thing certain about Second Peter it is that it was not written by Peter. There is no trace whatever of the Epistle until fairly late in the second century. Long after this it was an object of dispute. St. Jerome (about 400) says: 'It is disputed by the majority.'"

The Letters of John are all ascribed to the same author. This is what Professor Sparks says on that point (p. 37): "No fresh problems of authorship are raised by these epistles. The tradition in the Church is definite; and the evidence provided by the constant occurrence of the same words, phrases, and ideas is conclusive, not only that all three are the work of the same author but also that that author was the author of St. John." He hesitates when it comes to making a decision for the Book of Revelation. He concludes his remarks with the sentence: "We are justified, therefore, in concluding that although they cannot have been written by the same author, they are nevertheless products of the same school" (p. 141).

The closing chapters of the book are concerned with a description of the development of the New Testament canon beginning with Marcion's heretical choice of St. Paul and the Gospel of St. Luke down to the Easter letter of St. Athanasias written in 367, where only the twenty-seven books of the present list are given as canonical. MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN

THE CREATION: FACTS, THEORIES, AND FAITH. By Theodore L. Handrich. Moody Press, Chicago. 311 pages, 6×8½. \$3.95.

Mr. Handrich is principal of our Church's parish school at Glencoe, Minn., and the author of a well-received apologetic manual, *Everyday Science for the Christian*. Both works show that he has read extensively

in the field of science, and what he says in this area is well documented and supported by good authorities. The author's appeal is to young men and women who at school meet defenders of a boastful, arrogant pseudo-science which would have them believe that it is impossible to accept Scripture in its claim of man's creation and redemption. The writer aims to show that the Bible is the divine truth. He discusses such important subjects as the problem of certainty in the realm of scientific facts, God and His relationship to the universe, uncertainties in theories that attempt to harmonize science and the Bible, the geology of coal, continental glaciers, radio-activity as an age indicator, miscellaneous geological questions, and evolution. In a final chapter, "Concluding Remarks," he urges the ultimate results of his investigations, namely, that the Bible as God's book of salvation never fails us. In meeting the hypotheses of scientists he neither surrenders the divine truth nor shows himself extreme in denying the possibility of certain physical phenomena. He points out that not everything averred on these matters by scientists can always be proved to be true, nor does it disprove the truth of Scripture. He admits that the world may be older than about 6,000 years, but rejects the hypothesis of eons, or periods, since, judged by the time during which created radium would disintegrate to the present amount (which, of course, is also a mere hypothesis), the world at best can be no more than 35,000 years old. We recommend this book to our pastors, especially for discussion with young people of their church to whom the apparent disharmony between the Bible and science presents real problems. It is a thoughtful, honest, and profound investigation of the assertions of modern science, ending in the appeal not to surrender Scripture in favor of scientific hypotheses. One may not agree with every statement in the book, but in general it is a wholesome, helpful work, of which today we need many more.

J. T. MUELLER

YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL. By J. B. Phillips. New York: Macmillan, 1953. vii and 140 pages. \$2.00.

J. B. Phillips is that rare being, an authentic Anglican Evangelical. His reputation in America depends chiefly on his translation of the epistles of the New Testament as *Letters to Young Churches* and, more recently, on his companion translation *The Gospels*. But he is less known here than he ought to be as the author of an impressive series of thoroughly adult, hard-hitting, sharply pointed, persuasively written religious tracts that are among the best to be had anywhere.

Your God Is Too Small is the work of J. B. Phillips the tract writer. Despite its length it is a tract in purpose, in language, and in argument. (It also incorporates fragments of his shorter tracts.) It falls into two almost equal parts, one headed "Unreal Gods," and frankly labeled **DESTRUCTIVE**, the other headed "An Adequate God" and marked **CONSTRUCTIVE**.

Part One, a superb commentary on aspects of idolatry that adolescent catechisms neglect, is worth the price of the book by itself. In it Mr. Phillips proceeds "to expose the inadequate conceptions which still linger unconsciously in many minds, and which prevent our catching a glimpse of the true God." He treats at some length a dozen different conventional undersized deities:

The Resident Policeman (the "hectically overdeveloped," or falsely trained, or moribund conscience);

The Parental Hangover (compounded of "half-forgotten images of our earthly parents");

The Grand Old Man (who must be worshiped with archaic language and Victorian hymns and must be talked about in sermons and addresses "stuffed with religious jargon and technical terms which strike no answering chord in the modern heart");

The Meek and Mild (the picture of "a soft and sentimental Jesus . . . supported by sugary hymns and pretty religious pictures");

Absolute Perfection ("God is truly Perfection, but He is no Perfectionist, and one hundred per cent is not God");

The Heavenly Bosom (who is "not the Jesus of the Gospels, who certainly would have discouraged any sentimental flying to His bosom");

God-in-a-Box (a god who is "Roman [or] Anglican or Baptist or Methodist or Presbyterian or what have you");

The Managing Director ("so far removed from the human context in which we alone can appreciate 'values'" that he is "a mere bunch of perfect qualities—which means an Idea and nothing more.");

The Secondhand God ("which the continual absorption of fictional ideas nourishes at the back of our minds");

The Perennial Grievance ("an imaginary god with less good sense, love and justice than we have ourselves");

The Pale Galilean (an "imaginary god with the perpetual frown" who appeals to those who derive "a certain spiritually masochistic joy in being crushed by the juggernaut of a negative god");

The Projected Image ("with moral qualities like our own, vastly magnified and purified of course, *and with the same blind spots*").

Mr. Phillips follows this analysis with thumbnail sketches of "assorted" little gods that infest human minds—the god in a hurry, the god for the elite (that is, mystic saints and such), the God of Bethel (worshiped by people who "have not appreciated the revolutionary character of God's invasion of the world in Christ"), the god without godhead, and gods "by any other Name."

The second part is essentially a defense of the reasonableness of the Incarnation, the Deity, and the saving work of Our Lord. Although it is as scintillatingly written as the first part, it suffers from the inherent weakness of all apologetics. The argument is fresh and ingenious, however, and it is sufficiently a proclamation of the Good News that it is not

mere apologetics. Strongest are the sections on the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the "abolition of death" (with its polemic both against the un-Biblical "icy river," "gloomy portal," and "bitter pains" of death for those who are "in Christ," and against the supposition that "death is anything but a disaster to those who have no grip on the timeless life of God"). In his concern not to commit himself one-sidedly to any theory of the Atonement, the author seems at a first reading, and in contrast to the rest of the book, almost to fail in saying explicitly as much as he should have said about the Act of Satisfactory Reconciliation in which *the* Representative Man who is God suffered in His own Person the logical and inevitable suffering and death that the world has earned (the phraseology is that of Phillips). Again, one can easily misread his simple descriptions of the necessity for a profound change in man's attitude toward God and of the fact of that change in Christians as if he were attributing to human beings outside the body of Christ a measure of spiritual competence that they do not possess. But for all that, *Your God Is Too Small* is a stimulating and useful book for any pastor.

ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN

SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM. A DIALOG BETWEEN JOHN BAPTSTEAD AND MARTIN CHILDFONT. By Uuras Saarnivaara. Vantage Press, Inc. 106 pages, 5½ × 8½. \$2.00.

Dr. Uuras Saarnivaara was born in Finland, studied at the theological department of the University of Helsinki, and in 1930 became an ordained minister of the Lutheran Church of Finland. In 1939 he came to America and took the chair of theology at Suomi Theological Seminary, Hancock, Mich. He is an industrious writer, having written more than twelve books in the Finnish language and several in English. He is a regular contributor to the *Lutheran Quarterly* and other periodicals. His most recent work, *Scriptural Baptism*, defends the Lutheran doctrine of Infant Baptism against the "baptistic" view of Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, and others. Written in dialog form, the book presents Martin Childfont as defending Infant Baptism and John Baptstead as denying it. In the "Introduction" the two opponents agree on the correct hermeneutic principles that must guide them in their discussion. John and Martin originally had been members of the same church advocating Infant Baptism. But John had left his church and joined a "baptistic" denomination, and the dialog grows out of his attempt to persuade his neighbor Martin to do likewise. The resulting debate is extremely interesting and instructive, and in the end John finds himself refuted and promises his friend to give the matter some more thought and study. A "Comparative Summary" places the "baptistic" and "pedobaptistic" views and arguments side by side and shows that both Scripture and church history favor Infant Baptism. All arguments of John Baptstead are taken from recognized and well-documented sources. Those who oppose Infant Baptism therefore

receive fair treatment. Martin Childfont proves himself almost a second Martin Luther in his dialectic acumen, his comprehensive and profound knowledge of Scripture, and his persuasive use of history. Questions that are treated in the book are the following: "Was Infant Baptism practiced in the time of Christ and the apostles?" "Did Christ want His Church to practice Infant Baptism, or Baptism after conscious conversion?" "Does the New Testament teach Baptism as a means of grace, or as an act of obedience and confession of faith?" "Is Baptism an act of God, or of man?" "How old is the 'baptistic' doctrine?" "Immersion or sprinkling?" "Is it true that a person once saved is always saved?" There are other questions of great importance discussed for the benefit of the reader of this profound and useful treatise on Baptism. The dialog is not always easy to follow. At times the discriminating reader is inclined to question certain statements. But on the whole the book can be recommended very warmly to pastors and congregational study groups, especially in sections where the traditional church doctrine on Infant Baptism is challenged. The reviewer hopes that it will be widely studied. J. T. MUELLER

YOUNG CHINA IN THE VALLEY OF DECISION. By Palmer I. Anderson. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1953. 123 pages, 5½ × 7¾. Paper cover. \$1.00.

The author served with the E. L. C. mission in China from 1921 till 1951, and he has since been serving in Hong Kong. His book has sixteen chapters, and each chapter tells of one or two young Chinese who have come to the valley of decision. The author's heart is sad as he tells the stories of a number of them who gave up Christianity to follow Marxism, but the reviewer rejoices with the author that there were also about as many Christians who determined to cast their lot with the Church and to remain faithful to their Lord. There are also the secret believers. It is most heartening to note that not all by any means is lost in China. If you have been interested in China, this book will give you new courage.

E. C. ZIMMERMANN

LUTHERAN CHURCH CALENDAR. By Arthur Carl Piepkorn (editor). Ashby Printing Company, Erie, Pa. Single copies, 50 cents; in quantities, 21 cents per copy.

Previous editions of this calendar have found their way into many sacristies, church offices, and pastors' studies. Its worth lies not only in its practical value, but also in its reliability. Pastors will not have to worry whether or not their altar guild is using the right paraments if the members of the guild will but follow this calendar. Experience has taught us that the editor has acted judiciously in deciding on a liturgical color when no fixed tradition could be found. The number of each day of the month is printed in its appropriate liturgical color. On the back of each page valuable information for the correct liturgical observance of the month is

given, which includes suggested hymns for various days and occasions. And on the back of the calendar we find not only an explanation of the use of the liturgical colors, but also an informative discussion of the church year and of the church worship. Attention should likewise be called to a short but thought-provoking consideration of correct liturgical usages, printed on the inside of the back cover. There is great need for a calendar of this kind, and we are grateful that it is available. While the church year is ignored and belittled by some, we Lutherans, as well as other liturgical bodies, are aware of its importance, value, and God-pleasing helpfulness.

WALTER E. BUSZIN

ST. AUGUSTINE — SERMONS FOR CRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY. Translated and annotated by Thomas Comerford Lawler. Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1952. 249 pages, 5¾ × 8¾. \$3.25.

This excellent collection is part of the noteworthy series "Ancient Christian Writers — The Works of the Fathers in Translation," of which fifteen volumes have thus far been published by the Newman Press. The editors of the series are Johannes Quasten, S. T. D., and Joseph C. Plumpe, Ph. D., of the Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. While English versions of sermons by Augustine have been published before, we are assured that most of the sermons included in the present volume are herewith published in an English translation for the first time.

Though a pre-eminent preacher of the Christian Church, Augustine is better known to the Church of today and of past ages by his longer works rather than by his short *Sermones ad populum*. He enjoyed widespread fame as a professional rhetorician long before his conversion to the Christian faith. From A. D. 370—373 he studied rhetoric in Carthage, and later he taught rhetoric in this same city before proceeding to Rome to establish there a school of rhetoric. Still later he became municipal professor of rhetoric at Milan, where he made the acquaintance of St. Ambrose, whose eloquent sermons became the vehicle of the Holy Ghost which made of Augustine a Christian. Though in the Western Church the privilege of preaching was reserved to bishops, Augustine was permitted to preach while still an ordinary member of the clergy. Before long other members of the rank and file of the priesthood were accorded the same privilege enjoyed by Augustine. People came in large numbers to hear him. These included not only Christians and pagans but likewise heretics, like the Donatists, whose errors Augustine attacked in his sermons in no uncertain terms. About seven hundred of his sermons have been authenticated and are today available; "obviously the survival of so many of his sermons must be credited in very great measure to his effectiveness and popularity as an orator" (p. 5), says Mr. Lawler.

One marvels at the pronounced doctrinal emphasis found in the sermons of St. Augustine. His message is always straightforward and direct, and he does not depend upon rhetorical devices and excellencies of speech

to put his message across. He clearly realized that the strength of the Word lies in the Word itself and not in what he might do to it. We again quote Mr. Lawler: "Augustine not merely embellishes his teaching of the people with quotations from the Bible; but, as Pope puts it: 'It was the Bible all the time. . . . It was the quarry for all his doctrine; it is "the Word of God" that feeds his soul and out which he "provides old things and new" for the spiritual needs of his flock.'" St. Augustine's maxim was *Nos verba Dei seminamus*—"We are the sowers of the Word of God." That the people of his day, a day of heresy and error, derived joy and satisfaction from sermons of this type and even followed Augustine from basilica to basilica in order to hear these doctrinal discourses is indeed a tribute which can hardly be paid to the multitudes of our day. Augustine's sermons are firm and clear; one is not left in doubt as to what Augustine means to say. He resorts to no pussyfooting, to no sentimentalizing, and to no scientific or purely rhetorical use of psychology. He remains quite objective even when attacking the errorists of his day. He minces no words in denouncing the evils of his day, and his sermons were timely. He naturally counted not only the pagan carnality of his time but also the doctrinal errors of the Arians and of the Donatists among the evils then rampant and condemned them accordingly. Unlike John Chrysostom, he did not require two hours to put his message across; his sermons averaged from twelve to fifteen minutes for their delivery.

Mr. Lawler's translation is in good, idiomatic English. His Introduction is informative and interesting. The Newman Press is indeed to be commended for making this fine material available in a day which, like the day of Augustine, needs doctrinal emphasis and straightforward and virile preaching.

WALTER E. BUSZIN

THE SECRET OF BEAUTIFUL LIVING. By Oswald Riess. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953. vii+134 pages, 4¾×7¾. \$1.50.

Originally directed to the convention of the Michigan District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in 1951, these deeply spiritual and moving chapters will in this permanent form stimulate many a pastor toward better, more thoughtful, and more evangelical preaching. Above all they will serve to lead the pastor himself to a more reflective, more patient, and closer walk with his Savior. In effect this book suggests a method of "walking with Jesus," pondering His Word and drawing on His life. This is a field of writing which places a high premium on the personal piety and the literary skill of the writer. Pastor Riess puts us all in his debt.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER