

but other researchers with a narrower focus will need to refine and more fully document the author's assertions.

*The Puritan Way of Death* is necessary reading for anyone who has to deal professionally with death and dying. It reminds us that death, along with birth, perhaps the most individual of human experiences, has a history of which we are the inheritors.

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Strauss, Gerald. *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978. xii + 390 pp. \$20.00.

Gerald Strauss, one of the best known Americans working in the field of German Reformation studies, has written a precise and compelling study about the Lutheran attempt to transform individuals by providing them with "a Christian mind-set, motivational drive, and way of life" (p. 307). Hence his analysis approaches the question of the success of the Protestant Reformation from a different perspective than that usually adopted by historians. He defines success in terms of the total transformation of lifestyle advocated by the most enthusiastic of the Reformers.

Although Strauss is concerned with the role of both the home and the school in effecting this transformation, he concentrates his attention upon the educational system of Lutheran Germany, for the Reformers rapidly concluded that the indoctrination of the young provided the best method for transforming individuals into genuine Christians. The vernacular school system had largely been established by the Reformers who ensured the priority of religious goals. As a result, Strauss points out, the object of education became the forging of "a motivational link between inner purposes and outward actions" through internalizing "the rules of Christian life as a set of guiding precepts originating in the intellect and the will" (p. 237). Despite their most earnest efforts, Strauss concludes, the Reformers failed in their attempt to turn sinners into saints—a failure graphically recorded in the visitation records surviving in various German archives (see especially chap. 12). Therefore he feels justified in asserting that "a century of Protestantism had brought about little or no change in the common religious conscience and in the ways in which ordinary men and women conducted their lives" (p. 299).

Strauss's explanation for this failure is of interest to students of church history and religious education as well as to historians of the Reformation. First, he notes the paradox between the doctrine of total

depravity as a consequence of original sin and the rather naïve belief in the ability of education to transform human nature (p. 152). Then he points to the unresolved tension between faith and works and speaks of "the confusions and doubts left unresolved in people's minds by pulpit and catechism" (p. 235). Undoubtedly, he believes that this confusion and ambiguity increased the apathy and carelessness of the populace in regard to spiritual matters. Finally he points out that the Reformers were hindered by the growing bureaucratization of the church and by the increasing association of the church with the dominant social group throughout Germany (p. 305). These factors flawed the educational methodology, confused the young, and eroded the popular base which had originally provided support for the Lutheran Reformation.

Strauss devoted six years to the research and writing of this study. The research is thorough, based on archival materials in Germany, and the conclusions are well documented. Unfortunately, the style of writing is complex and heavy, a factor which will limit readership to those genuinely interested in the German Reformation and its consequences. Those who accept the challenge will be rewarded with a unique view of developments in Germany following the Reformation.

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