

ical issues, it is easy to select citations from other scholars which embody this concern, and then to dismiss those scholars as misguided followers of a false method. This polemical use of his typology seems to me to be applied in far too sweeping a manner – reminiscent at times of Tertullian's prescriptive manner of dealing with the heretics.

Its positive application is more promising, but here too the outcome is disappointing. Five areas of debate are dealt with – God; man; the world; history; incarnation. Each of these is subdivided into more specific issues, making a total of twenty-two problems in all. For each problem we are given a summary of the main attitude and arguments of Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Clement. Professor Osborn knows his sources well, as his earlier books on Justin and Clement bear witness. But however accurate the reporting of their views, the presentation is inevitably bitty. Moreover in his determination to avoid the errors of the culturalist and the doxographer, he presents the views of the four writers so baldly that he fails to illuminate the issues as much as he might have done, had he not been quite so concerned to maintain the purity of his method. But what he does give us is clear and to the point.

After the expository material on each of the five main areas stands a separate section entitled 'Problems and parallels'. The expressed intention of these sections

is to consider 'parallel contemporary problems' and 'to show some places where mutual illumination is possible' (p 16). The approach again is interesting; for it is surely right to insist that our problems are not totally different, even though their particular form and contemporary setting preclude too direct an identification with the precise argumentation or conclusions of past thinkers. Thus the juxtaposition of ancient and modern reflections holds out the prospect of a fruitful cross-fertilisation of ideas, while avoiding the confusion of a false identification. But here too the execution of the idea is disappointing. The *Stromateis* that we are offered are made up of random reflections on a selection of recent writings about loosely allied topics. They are too brief and too miscellaneous to be significant in the way desired.

All in all the book represents a courageous and ambitious undertaking. Its desire to show the distinctive character of early Christian reflection on some of the fundamental topics of the faith in its own terms, and thereby to show its continuing philosophical and theological worth is to be commended. Such an objective is not easy to achieve, though I do not believe it to be impossible of attainment. But regretfully I have to report that, though some of the necessary raw material is to be found in this book, it has not here been achieved in an effective or illuminating way.

MAURICE WILES

LUTHER: A BIOGRAPHY by H. G. Haile
Sheldon Press, London pp 422 £9.95.

Dr Haile is Professor of German at the University of Illinois. He has previously written a biography of Goethe, and now turns to Luther with an impressive armoury of scholarship, a fluent and vivacious style (although what Dr Vidler calls his "idiomatic, contemporary English" should certainly be "American" – cf. p 350, where some words of Luther are translated "we old ones must live so long in order to look the devil in the ass") and a critical determination to re-enact the life-experiences

of his subject. English students of Luther, nurtured on Boehmer, Watson, Todd and Gordon Rupp, will find something fresh in almost every sentence, and bibliographies on a multitude of matters (in the Notes) which are largely unfamiliar, and above all a concentration on Luther's later years, less vital perhaps doctrinally than the years of his "progress to the Diet of Worms", but even more instructive from the standpoint of human nature and contemporary history.

Dr Haile lights up his story with vivid

geographical detail (e.g. p 139f), and is unwearied in his pursuit of his ideal of historical understanding, which he sets out in his Epilogue: "biography must be best served when the writer can seize on his subject at an especially characteristic moment, if possible one at which a personality itself sensible of its own former epochs was able to come to terms with them. The mature Luther, looking back over his career, achieved a comprehensive vision of one man in his time. I have tried to pass it on". He will not surrender to current heresies such as the elevation of technology as the master-concept of history (p 383f), or of psychiatry as the key to the "Young Man Luther" (p 400, n. 11). He gives us surprising sidelights on Luther's intellectual contemporaries: not everyone thinks of Machiavelli in these terms (p 95ff). He can tell an old story with sparkling freshness (e.g. the Wittenberg Concord p 133ff). Time and again sidelights are cast on doctrinal issues – the Two Realms (p 94ff), Luther's Satan (p 191ff), the use of the Old Testament (e.g. Luther's marvellous exposition of Noah, p 333ff), heaven, hell and purgatory (p 325f), Luther the theologian of experience (passim), Luther's anti-medievalism on womanhood and marriage (p 259ff), and above all Luther on the Law (p 223ff and p 361f). Luther's profound influence, especially on German culture, is brought out in many ways – for example "in that springtime of German letters, the early eighteenth century, when . . . every single author of note was the son of a Lutheran pastor, with but one exception" (p 340); more particularly, "the modern science of bibliography arises in large part from the centuries of scholarly effort with Luther's work" (p 384).

Not that Luther emerges unspotted. There are pages, painful to read (one imagines) by the most hardened Protestant, on Luther's later grossness, abusiveness and vulgarity: there is a sharp (and just) condemnation of his later writings on the Jews, where "irrationality borders on paranoia" (p 288). But the historian must never be a mere moralist: the pages on Luther and Philip of Hesse are a model of judicious historical insight (p 273 ff).

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What is the relevance of all this to the modern Church scene? One of the priceless services history can give is precisely this "re-enactment" of the past – not contentiously, to serve a present ecclesiastical interest, but with critical sympathy: and our age has been enriched by studies of great saints and sinners from historians in other camps – by Catholics of Luther and Wesley, by Protestants of Newman and Manning. Mutual understanding, in depth, may well precede reconciliation – a process begun on the doctrinal front by Vatican II. Dr Haile's volume will take its place in a growing succession.

After this, it should not be ungrateful to point to one vulgar blunder – hardly a mere misprint, because it is so often repeated: *epikeia* for *epieikeia*. To say that Luther "recommended the Aristotelian concept of *epikeia*" (p 268) would have startled both these great men: it may be that an elementary knowledge of Greek is not among Dr Haile's impressive accomplishments. Perhaps he, like Luther, might take comfort from the *Didache* (6:2) – "If you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect; but if you cannot, do what you can".

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