

not be put into some "mythic" or "symbolic" realm; Christian theology begins with a generally reliable Gospel portrait of Jesus; no one's interpretation of this portrait should be canonized, rather we require discussion of how to implement its implications and consensus about next steps; inherited structures and traditions of the past are only of value insofar as they serve welfare now—many should be radically challenged; yet our finiteness and weakness mean we should change carefully, constructively, with a sense of our own frailty. To be dogmatic is almost as bad as being Republican! The slash of the "radical" edge is made doubly effective by

the drive of Bennett's irenic, tolerant hand. Conservatives forget the imperative; radicals dislike the style. In substance and spirit Bennett has something that escapes them both.

Churchman, moralist, liberal—in all these ways Bennett's work continues an Anglo-American tradition going back, at least, to the Christian Socialists of the mid-nineteenth century. It is a tradition of faith, order, thought, and action that should not die but should lead in the contemporary churches. It needs a more self-conscious polity and social philosophy. It can claim, in John C. Bennett, one of the saints.

Willy Brandt: Prisoner of His Past by Viola Herms Drath

(Chilton; 364 pp.; \$8.95)

Ken Moen

Willy Brandt: Nobel Prize winner, symbol of Germany's *Ostpolitik*, the Peace Chancellor. In 1972 his fortunes were soaring. His unceremonious fall from power in 1974 transformed him into a truly tragic figure. Who is he? What caused his downfall? What is his future? Viola Herms Drath, the Washington correspondent for *Vorwaerts*, Germany's Social Democratic newspaper, provides some answers in *Willy Brandt: Prisoner of His Past*. She stresses the private side of Brandt's personality and purports to have found the seeds of his downfall in the depths of his flawed character. Her thesis is controversial and, I'm afraid, unconvincing, if not altogether inscrutable. Nonetheless, her "impressionistic" biography contains a wealth of information on Brandt and European politics.

Brandt once observed: "He who has a sense of history will not lightly overlook the fact that a man of my origin and convictions has become the German Minister of Foreign Affairs." An exile from Nazi Germany who worked with radical left underground organizations against the Hitler war effort, Brandt emerged from the war as a Norwegian citizen. He returned to Germany armed with charges that all Germans shared the guilt for Hitler's war crimes. Not surprisingly, many Germans resented his background and his message. As a politician he seemed fated to the ranks of the opposition, far from the levers of power. Somehow, however, he became

Foreign Minister. Then Chancellor. The poignancy of Brandt's remark is not lost on Drath. Examination of his past is essential, and she does it with relish.

Brandt's psychological makeup as revealed by his past is a central theme in her book. She characterizes him as an insecure outsider who will go to any lengths to avoid looking undignified. She maintains that he has never faced up to the embarrassments and human mistakes of his past, and she speculates that imminent disclosure of private indiscretions played a large role in his decision to step down. She hints darkly of blackmail. By Guillaume, the East German spy discovered employed in Brandt's own office? By East German leaders, in order to gain advantages in *Ostpolitik* negotiations? By the U.S., in order to slow his rush to the East? Drath asks each question rhetorically, offers no documentation, and ventures no guesses herself. Nonetheless, almost lecturing, she concludes that Brandt's "...character became his fate...."

In the early chapters Drath emphasizes Brandt's reputation as a ladies' man. Unfortunately, she creates the aura of sensationalism. Eleanor Lansing Dulles, sister of John Foster and Allen Dulles and a State Department expert in her own right, comments in an excellent foreword to the book:

"During the years I knew Brandt best, the Germans in Bonn, Berlin, or Munich gave little impression of being greatly concerned over his life as a

swinger. It was known that he had times of overindulgence and a reoccurrence of these tendencies could hamper his usefulness and age him prematurely. This possibility cannot be completely dismissed, but Mrs. Drath is more convinced than I am that these periods of erratic behavior are worth the reader's attention."

Whether or not Drath's emphasis on the psychological and the sensational is warranted, it leaves much about Brandt's resignation unexplained. Both Drath and David Binder, a *New York Times* correspondent who has also recently written a Brandt biography *The Other German*, note Brandt's keen disappointment when Herbert Wehner, Social Democratic Party (SPD) strategist, refused to advise him to ride out the 1974 Guillaume storm. There is every indication that had Wehner so advised in the final hours of the Brandt administration, Brandt would have clung to the chancellorship. Moreover, Brandt had already weathered sex-scandal accusations in previous election campaigns. By 1974 the German public was, in Drath's own words, "...a public sooner amused by Willy's legendary derring-do than shocked."

Drath does do justice to Brandt's contributions to European politics and lends insight to what we might expect of him in the future. She analyzes his political strength (selling a political idea whose time has come) and weakness (a penchant for yes-men and hangers-on of mediocre talent) and puts them into the context of European affairs.

Brandt's role in developing Germany's *Ostpolitik* is by now familiar. As Drath points out, the policy was not conceived by Brandt, but he was one of its earliest advocates and its most successful salesman. The German version of détente has several moral dimensions

that were never present in the U.S.-USSR model. Within postwar Europe it symbolized the moral courage to face responsibility for Nazi transgressions. Acceptance of that responsibility eased Germany's reentrance into European affairs, and the relinquishment of Germany's unrealistic demands for reunification eased the plight of families and friends separated by the Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain. Brandt's past made him uniquely qualified to provide Germany with the moral leadership it needed to acknowledge its Nazi past.

In the end, however, he failed to produce the practical achievements expected by the German public. The financial and territorial costs of *Ostpolitik* had soared, and the public began to wonder whether its negotiators were getting the best bargain possible. *Ostpolitik* had proceeded beyond its initially imposing moral dimensions and had entered the realm of the pragmatic. Brandt was no longer uniquely qualified. In fact, because of his radical past and his inability as chancellor to control the SPD's radical Young Socialists, he was particularly vulnerable to charges

that the East was beating him at the negotiating table. When an East German spy was found employed in Willy Brandt's own office, his fate was sealed. Drath frowns on such "political" explanations, but I find them more convincing than her psychological approach.

In the final analysis Drath's insight is valuable. Her verdict on Brandt:

"Contrary to his detractors, there is nothing reprehensible about Brandt's—by any voter's standard—untidy past. Quite the contrary, the politician's long and thorny, meandering road to the top, replete with detours into political radicalism and human blunders, suggests an unchallengeable Socialist constancy and an admirable commitment to social justice."

She feels he has a future in European politics, and, in view of Brandt's recently announced candidacy for a seat in the first European Parliament, her views are timely. Marred as it is by traces of sensationalism, poor organization, and awkward writing, Drath's "close look at the magic Brandt personality" is nonetheless a welcome contribution.

African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community by Benjamin C. Ray

(Prentice-Hall; xii + 239 pp.; \$8.95/\$4.95)

John S. Mbiti

Much of the growing literature on African religion continues to be produced by foreign scholars, who, whatever their other merits, see it from the outside. In 1972 Benjamin Ray, Assistant Professor of Religion at Princeton, spent a few months in Uganda (visiting Nigeria en route home), and while there did field study in some aspects of African religious life. Drawing largely from that short stay, he has written *African Religions: Symbol, Ritual, and Community*, beautifully produced in the "Prentice-Hall Studies in Religion Series."

Professor Ray claims that his book "is thematically organized to show the structural unity of African religions in terms of symbols, ritual, and community." In reality it is basically a compila-

tion of "case studies," which gives the reader the feeling of going on a religious tour, hopping from one airport to another, from east to west, from south to north.

In his introductory chapter the author gives a sketchy account of studies of African religions (he prefers to use the plural). The sketch is too brief to be of any serious academic help. Among other things, he digs up old prejudices about Africans as written by Europeans and Americans, but leaves them at that without indicating where he himself stands in the matter. He is particularly critical of scholars who have attempted to present a systematic study of African religion, charging them with overgeneralizing, drawing up catalogues of

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