

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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A new Work examines “Baptists in the Weimar Republic”

(Bonn, 30.11.2015) A new volume from the Bonn publishing house Kultur und Wissenschaft within the series “History – Church History – Reformation” deals with the ethical and political positions of Baptist free churches during the Weimar Republic. Consequently, the Baptist journal *Der Wahrheitszeuge* (English translation: *Witness to the Truth*) was primarily examined in order to see how the editor and other authors expressed themselves on issues relating to politics and society during the Weimar Republic (1919-1932), in particular as their writing related to democracy, socialism, and National Socialism.

In the midst of the tumult of the Weimar Republic (1919-1932), Baptists attempted to advance their missions and church work in Germany. Did their faith help them to cope with the challenges of the times? How did they feel and think. Why were a number of developments nowadays generally accepted a shock for people then, while others were justified by them? And how did Baptist authors react to the three big political concepts (democracy, socialism, and National Socialism) which vied for domination?

The author, Manfred Stedtler, is Pastor of the Free Evangelical Church of Halle (Saale). He majored in history and had minors in political science and Evangelical theology at the University of Leipzig (Master of Arts, 2001). He later studied theology extra-occupationally, in a part-time program at the Martin Bucer Seminary's Chemnitz Study Center.

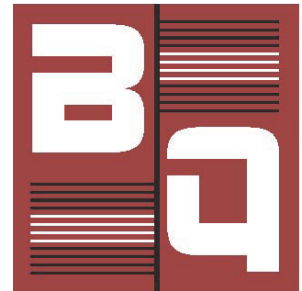
Bibliographical details: Manfred Stedtler. *Baptisten in der Weimarer Republik: Ihre Gedanken zu Politik und Gesellschaft. Geschichte – Kirchengeschichte – Reformation – Bd. 27.* Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft: Bonn, 2015. 168 pp. Pb. €15.00. ISBN 978-3-86269-094-7

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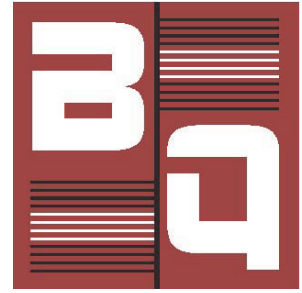
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Interview with Manfred Stedtler

BQ posed the author a number of questions upon the occasion of the publication of his book.

BQ: Mr. Stedtler, how did you come up with your topic?

Originally, I was moved by the question of how Christians dealt with unemployment during the Great Depression. Since my family's roots lie in the Baptist tradition. I began to read the relevant issues of *Der Wahrheitszeuge* (English translation: *Witness to the Truth*).

At the same time, I learned that Baptists behaved in a manner that demonstrated strong adaptation to the situation they faced and that there was hardly any resistance from the side of Baptists (as was the case with most of the other free churches during the time of the Third Reich). For a number of years, there has been a debate underway on the topic of whether and in which ways theology contributed to this system-stabilizing passivity. For me, the question of how Baptists at that time were shaped and how the Bible and faith changed their political and social attitudes arose.

BQ: What surprised you, astonished you, disappointed you, irritated you, or otherwise touched you emotionally most when studying the source material?

It was shocking to see how much criticism there was about the Republic and how anti-Semitic lines of thought were a matter of course among those Christians who expressly distanced themselves from National Socialism. It is also striking how strongly Germans felt themselves to be the victims of Western aggression.

It was fascinating, particularly against this backdrop, to see the struggle to achieve a Biblical answer to various questions and how faith repeatedly had to dismantle biases.

I was positively impressed by the commitment the authors held, lived out, and passed on during the deepest of crises (and apparently also many of the readers).

BQ: What can we learn today from what you found out working on your book and what you documented therein?

To begin with, that having right belief does not automatically lead to better politics!

Also, that one should not prematurely judge an individual or a movement. Rather, one should put oneself in another individual's position in order to be able to understand (and correct) what that person might say and do.

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- Photo of the author ([jpg](#))

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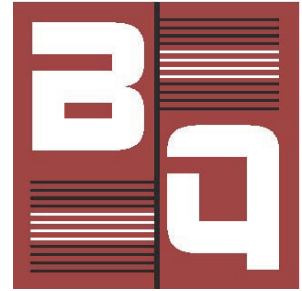
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