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A Short Life Of Kierkegaard



Synopsis

The Description for this book, Short Life of Kierkegaard, will be forthcoming.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[P]robably as good an introduction to Kierkegaard and his works as any that is likely ever to be produced."--Times Literary Supplement

Walter Lowrie (1868-1959) played a leading role in introducing Kierkegaard to the English-speaking world as his first English-language biographer and the first English translator of more than a dozen volumes of his work. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Superb, touching book on the life of the greatest theologian of the second millennium.

Walter Lowrie, probably unknowingly, described the whole of this "Short Life" well in a sentence: "Fortunately, in this chapter I can tell much of the story in S.K.'s own words, supplying merely the connective tissue which may be necessary to hold his scattered utterances together." This account of Kierkegaard's life is presently largely in the man's own words, with the author serving almost as an editor. S. K.'s journals and excerpts don't always make for the most fluent reading, and so Lowrie's comments and clarifications do well to bind the whole life together and shine light on much of the more ambiguous meaning. The chronology of his life in the book is a bit confusing at times

and, because he lets Kierkegaard do a lot of the talking, Lowrie forfeits the chance to present as compelling a narrative as some biographies do, but S.K.'s life is so dramatic and interesting in and of itself that the reading is nevertheless arresting. The "Short Life" is a little dated at this point, but is written by one of the Kierkegaard scholars of the day, and I think it should provide any student or casual reader with a fine introduction to the man's thought and the events that shaped and colored that thought so powerfully.

Lowrie gives his version of Kierkegaard's life - the only version I really know. That said, his telling of the Kierkegaard story is supplemented by many quotations from Kierkegaard's journals and his books, many of which contained veiled autobiography. Lowrie's assessment of Kierkegaard's motivations and his sense for the dramatic and important moments of this man's life is indisputable. By my understanding, Lowrie was primary in bringing Kierkegaard into the English language and the wider culture. Bravo, an excellent job which remains a worthwhile and engaging read.

This was one of my favorite biographies of Kierkegaard. It is written in such a manner that you cannot put it down once you start reading it. It's so well written. For starters, there simply is NOT a better intro to Kierkegaard. After reading this, read Soren Kierkegaard: A Biography by Joakim Garff (it's just as good but a lot more detailed and lengthier).

Walter Lowrie is the translator of most of Kierkegaard's works into English, and also the author of *Kierkegaard 2 Volumes* [Vol. I: Childhood, Youth, Early Manhood. / Vol. II: Intellectual Maturity, Becoming a Christian, The Corrective-The Sacrifice]. He wrote in the Preface to this 1942 book, "The Princeton University Press about eight months ago asked me to write 'a relatively short' life of Kierkegaard... it seemed to me strange for one man to write two biographies of the same person... This book is barely a quarter the size of the 'Kierkegaard' which was published by the Oxford University Press in 1938... This little book, simply a biography, may perhaps be more lucid than the other, in which it was sometimes difficult to see the forest for the trees." (Pg. vii-viii) He deals with the symbolism in *Either / Or* and its relation to Kierkegaard's broken-off engagement with Regina Olsen: "Here S.K. in a book which was meant for Regina explains his own case, and yet disguises it by assigning to a woman the role which he had played. He stresses the fact that Antigone cannot divulge the secret which would bring shame upon her father's memory, and that therefore she cannot marry him, for she will not enter into a marriage which is not perfectly open-hearted. The grim secret is her undoing." (Pg. 78) Later, he notes, "It does not seem possible

that Regina could have been happy as his wife, though it is clear enough that as the wife and widow of another man she continued to love and admire him." (Pg. 140)Lowrie notes, "During this period entries in the Journal are few and brief, but they indicate clearly enough that in April S.K. had fallen very low. They indicate frequent drunkenness and frequent thoughts of suicide." (Pg. 99) He adds, "There is general agreement in placing the sexual fall [i.e., dalliance with a prostitute] in the month of May... If we had no evidence of a sexual fall, we should have to invent it, since it had the gravest consequences for his subsequent life and, as we shall see, he was often tormented by the question whether he ought to confess it publicly." (Pg. 100-101)Of Kierkegaard's referring to his own "thorn in the flesh," Lowrie says, "What S.K. meant by his thorn we cannot discover more precisely than we can in the case of St. Paul. Both of them were humiliating physical disabilities... he tells us that he consulted a physician to learn if it might be removed, and at a later period he asked himself whether he ought not to 'draw it out.' In this small book it would not be appropriate to delve deeper into a mystery which has not yet been solved." (Pg. 126)When on his death bed he was asked whether he desired Communion, he said, "'Yes, but not from a parson.' Then it would be difficult to do it. 'Then I shall die without it.' That is not right. 'I will not dispute about it. I have made my choice. The parsons are royal functionaries, and royal functionaries are not related to Christianity.'" (Pg. 254-255)Lowrie has a great deal of sympathy and insight into Kierkegaard; this book will be of immense benefit to anyone seeking to know more about Kierkegaard.

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