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Secret Church (Louise A. Vernon)



Synopsis

The Anabaptists are a small group of Christians who believe that everyone is a priest and should be able to study the Bible. They refuse to baptize their babies, and instead baptize adults on a confession of faith in Christ. Because of these heretical acts they are persecuted and sometimes put in prison. Richard lives in Germany and is Caught up with the Anabaptists when his cousin Otto shows up seeking refuge. Richard needs help to hide Otto, but can he trust his friend Trudi? Her father hates the Anabaptists and wants to get rid of the whole movement! Join Richard as he helps his family, runs from guards, meets the legendary Menno Simons, and decides for himself whether he too wants to join the secret church.

Book Information

Series: Louise A. Vernon

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Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

Customer Reviews

There is a little white-washing of the Baptist movement (called Anabaptists) in order to make this a kids book. But, not much. The suspense and the danger come through the narrative very well.

Factual as best I can tell, but not overly well written. One character "disappears" in the story line. Still the best historical fiction I could find relating to the early Anabaptist movement.

The Secret Church is a small chapter book, that was written from the perspective of one child, Richard, during the period of the Anabaptists. I believe what the author, Louise Vernon wanted, was to write a captivating children's adventure from a young person's perspective. This, she accomplished. The book gives a fine introduction to a difficult period in church history; persecution is dealt with in honest terms, and throughout the book the author brings in people who lose their occupations and their homes because of their belief. Menno Simons, the leader of "The Brethren" movement is brought in near the end of the book and a basic understanding of this time period will be obtained. The main story line follows the fictitious adventures of Richard as he moves from being a young Catholic boy, to when he has to make a decision whether or not to help his relatives who are Anabaptists. Of course, the risk of being associated with heretics would cause a little heart pounding for any young reader. Richard's cousin Otto takes a large role in the book as does Trudi, a feisty friend whose father is not passive in his views of Anabaptists. As the book progresses, readers will be able to watch with Richard as his parents become convinced of their false views and take a stand for Christ as a result of the influence of Otto's parents. The struggle with Richard's own flesh ensues, and it is not until the end that Louise Vernon writes of the victory of Richard taking a stand for his beliefs. My only criticism of the book is the lack of adult interaction. I think it would have been better if the author had constructed more interactions between Richard and his parents as there is not a lot of adult dialog and Richard mainly discovers what's going on with the Anabaptists and his parents' conversion from his own volition. Parents are the ones who are to guide and raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. I didn't see this actively happening. Even so, with some parental clarification/editing I think it could be a great read, and most young readers would find it a thrilling book. The Secret Church reminded me a little of the well known "Trailblazer Series." The book was well written, and the story line moved along quickly, which, if you're reading this book aloud, will guarantee cries of "Don't stop reading yet! What happens next?" I've often wished that there were Christian historical books available for the 4th-7th grade reading level. This fit the bill. *Thanks to Herald Press for providing a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

And excellent little book about several children whose parents become Anabaptists. The book is written from the perspective of the children. And has a fabulous story line. It is good reading if you want your children to have a deeper faith in God.

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