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Book Review. - Literatur

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Book Review — Literatur

All books reviewed in this periodical may be procured from or through Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

A Harmony of the Gospels. The fourfold Gospel with brief explanatory notes based on the King James Version. By *Adam Fahling*, Pastor Martini Ev. Lutheran Church, Detroit, Mich. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 237 pages, 6×9½. Price, \$3.00.

Our brother Pastor Fahling, author of "The Life of Christ" and other volumes, has in this new production given us a very useful, serviceable work. Every student of the New Testament knows how important it is for him to possess a harmony of the Gospels. In the second century of our Christian era such a harmony was compiled by Tatian, of which only in recent years the modern age through archeological discoveries has obtained a fairly accurate conception. A century and a half later the father of church history, Eusebius, drew up his famous ten canons, in which all the Gospel passages which treat the same material are indicated and numbered so that the reader is enabled quickly to find the parallel passages for a certain account, if there are such. In our own days quite a number of harmonies of the Gospels have appeared. Many of them, like the one bearing the name Broadus and A. T. Robertson, have attained great popularity.

To draw up a harmony of the Gospels which is satisfactory, one must be well acquainted with the story of Jesus and have grappled with the various historical and chronological questions which confront the students in this sphere. Through his important work "The Life of Christ" Pastor Fahling has furnished evidence that he is admirably equipped for the task which he set out to do in this new volume. To give the reader of this journal an idea of the make-up of this book, let us say that the story of Jesus as presented in the four Gospels is here given in chronological sequence. Wherever the accounts treat of the same incident, they are printed in parallel columns, Matthew being given the place to the extreme left, John to the extreme right, Mark and Luke between the other two. A unique feature of this work is that "a distinctive type face has been employed for the individual Gospels" so that "the student can readily see from which particular Gospel the section or paragraph was taken." The various events or episodes are numbered, and a descriptive heading identifies them. The Harmony is divided into 37 chapters, a division which certainly aids the student in obtaining a clear conception of the order of events in our Savior's earthly life. Special features which should be noted are the numerous footnotes, in which special problems are briefly discussed, and an appendix, containing a list of the distinctive miracles of Jesus, the parables of our Lord, the distinct predictions of Christ pertaining to His death and resurrection, the Sabbath controversies of Jesus Christ, busy days in His ministry, the genealogy of Christ, the

family of Jesus, the comparative view of dates assigned to the birth, etc., of Christ, a bibliography, and an index of the passages constituting the body of the Harmony. As to the special views which have a bearing on the arrangement found, one might mention that Pastor Fahling says, "It seems that large portions of Matthew and also sections of Luke are topical rather than strictly chronological" (p.3). The King James Version of the English Bible is employed. The unnamed feast of John 5:1 is identified as the Passover of A. D. 28. We submit the note of Pastor Fahling on the question pertaining to the nature of this feast, in order to enable the reader to form an idea of the character of the footnotes which mark this volume: "The question cannot be definitely decided. Nearly all the Jewish festivals have been mentioned as being the unnamed feast of John 5:1. But the opinions are chiefly divided between Purim (14 and 15 of Adar, approximately February) and Passover. Fortunately, for the understanding of the passage it matters little which festival one believes it to have been. In our choice of the Passover in 28 A. D. we are prompted by the evangelist's evident purpose of supplementing the synoptic account of the life of Christ. When Jesus departed for Galilee, as reported in John 4:1-3, we are left under the impression that the forerunner's work was still in progress. We believe that all the events of John 4 and 5—the Samaritan ministry, the healing of the ruler's son, and the unnamed feast—are to be inserted before Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; and Luke 4:14."

As an interesting point of interpretation we might here put down the opinion Pastor Fahling adopts of the meaning of John 4:44. He holds that the words of St. John must be interpreted as meaning that Jesus for the time being withdrew to Galilee "because in His own country (Galilee) He would not likely be too highly honored, on account of the prejudices connected with His humble origin and the familiarity created by the knowledge of His home surroundings." This assumes that Jesus entered a certain section in order to escape being given homage and acclaim. Whatever a person may think of a view like the one just mentioned, we wish to express our joy that this valuable book has appeared, and we urge our pastors and teachers to purchase it.

W. ARNDT

A Pastor Looks at Kierkegaard. *The Man and His Philosophy.* By William T. Riviere. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 231 pages, 7½×5. Price, \$1.50.

The *Lutheran Herald* (April 29, 1941) states "that Kierkegaard is more widely read today by intelligent people than perhaps any other man, living or dead." And in our book we read: "Dr. Walter Lowrie (*Our Concern with the Theology of Crisis*, p. 11) calls Kierkegaard 'that tremendous Dane who failed to make any impression upon his own century and has become the predominant intellectual factor in ours.' That is going too far, but Kierkegaard's increasing renown and growing influence on the Continent ought to make him an object of our interest." What sort of theology did Soeren Kierkegaard (1813—1855) teach according to Dr. Riviere (a Presbyterian pastor)? Kierkegaard was not a theologian but a philosopher, a religious philosopher. "He begot a new school of philosophy, his sons being the existential philosophers and

perhaps the dialectic theologians." The sum of his philosophy is thus expressed by his disciple Karl Barth: "If I have a system, it lies in my keeping clearly in view what Kierkegaard called 'the infinite qualitative distinction (the infinite unlikeness in kind)' between time and eternity, taking this dissimilarity in both its negative and its positive aspects." That means, among other things, that man is utterly unable to reach God unless God reaches down to help him. "With a few deft strokes Kierkegaard outlines a philosophy of religion which argues that the message from God can reach man only through a God-man, but immediately he adds that such a message will not be received unless something wrong in the man is made right by superhuman power." There is something wrong in man, radically wrong, and that is the sinfulness of man. And stressing man's sinfulness and need of divine help is the thing (*one of the things—remark by the reviewer*) which the generation of rationalists of Kierkegaard's time needed and our generation of modernists needs. "The greatest stumbling-block—and from how many angles does Kierkegaard approach it!—is that man must confess himself a needy sinner." "Kierkegaard's name is now receiving more and more mention for his appreciation of the human predicament. . . . Kierkegaard manfully faced the facts of man's weakness, helplessness, hopelessness, dread, guilt, anguish. He faced them, studied them, made what he could of them, and put his trust in God through Jesus Christ. . . . He analyzed sin to see its danger. He described sin to bring out, in contrast, both the grace of forgiveness and the joy of being forgiven." (There is nothing in our book to show what Kierkegaard taught regarding the real nature of grace and saving faith).—Does Kierkegaard understand the real nature of grace and of sin? Our book states: "Christianity is a matter of life; it must be lived. Luther, says Kierkegaard, was correct when he emphasized faith instead of works; but then the next generation took advantage of the way Luther slighted James and forgot all about being doers of the Word and not hearers only. Christianity must be lived in imitation of Christ; and if churches and church leaders do not live Christianity, they ought at least to admit their failures. . . . Although there may be a haziness about our understanding of all the delicate shades of Kierkegaard's thought, on one point he is the most definite of the definite, the clearest of the clear, the sharpest of the sharp-pointed, and the plainest of the plain. Like the apostle James, he insists that faith must show itself by its works. James's short epistle and the Sermon on the Mount include many of Kierkegaard's favorite texts." On sin: "*The Concept of Dread* has been called Kierkegaard's 'first entirely serious book.' This book is a study of inherited sin; as we say, of original sin. You realize by now that our Dane was too individualistic to believe in original sin or even in Kant's radical evil. It will be a surprise to me if I ever find that Soeren Kierkegaard is Pauline enough to admit that man is dead in sin; but, synergist though he may be, he sees faith as a leap by which one springs out of an old condition and into a new range of possibilities."—A few more side-lights: "Kierkegaard charged that the visible Church and its ministers are characterized by an absolute lack of Christianity: 'Christianity is not there.'" "He admired

Luther and yet not only disagreed with him on some points but also wrote violently against him." "No form of Calvinism would have won the full allegiance of this man who could not understand the serpent and therefore calmly omitted the serpent from his study of the Fall and of original sin." And he even said this: "To force a child into the distinctively Christian categories is an act of violence, no matter how well intended."—Finally, Kierkegaard is hard to understand. "Unlike the thought of Descartes, or that of Spinoza or of Kant or Hamilton or Spencer, Kierkegaard's thought cannot be fairly presented in summary form,—not even by himself." This is due partly to "his preference for complexity and involvement instead of plain directness. . . . He liked to hide meanings, too, as well as motives. . . ." It is due mainly, we think, to the state of mind of one who knows something of the enormity of sin but has no clear knowledge of saving grace and withal asks philosophy to solve his problems and perplexities, a state of mind described by Dr. Riviere thus: "But the real life of this remarkable man was lived inwardly in that queer, deep, persistent, doubting, trustful, contradictory, oscillating, dialectical, despairing, hopeful, active, moving, intuitive, reflective, penetrative, discriminating mind of a great genius. The reader feels that this modern literary prince of Denmark was both sad and glad to be so sad."—We have presented Dr. Riviere's view of Kierkegaard as well as we could—for Dr. Riviere himself is sometimes obscure. We should say that, on the whole, Riviere admires Kierkegaard.

TH. ENGELDER

Does God Answer Prayer? By Louise Harrison McCraw. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 219 pages, 5½×7¾. Price, \$1.00.

Miss McCraw is a well-known writer of Christian fiction and biography. In the volume before us she departs from her usual line and presents to Christian readers a well-nigh complete treatise on Christian prayer, written with much fervor, convincing assurance, personal appeal, and manifestly out of rich and deep experiences of her own prayer-life. There are in all twenty-two chapters, bearing such titles as these: "Getting Ready to Pray"; "The First Prayer in the Day"; "Taking into Account Our Enemies"; "Prayer and the Bible"; "Praying for the Salvation of Souls"; "How Can We Be Sure We Are Asking According to His Will?"; "Two Things That Give Us Confidence"; etc. We recommend this study in Christian prayer, even though at times the reader will differ from what is said. Only a very sincere and devout believer could pen experiences as rich as those reported in this book.

J. THEODORE MUELLER

George Muller, the Man of Faith. By Basil Miller. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich. 159 pages. Price, \$1.00.

This is a biography of the "English Francke," who, starting out without a penny, in 64 years built in Bristol five large orphan homes, housed 10,000 orphans, gave aid through week-day and Sunday-schools to 150,000 children, circulated 2,000,000 Bibles and parts of Bibles, 3,000,000 other books and tracts, besides giving sums for missionary labors in all lands; spending a sum of \$7,244,800; all this, he emphasizes,

entirely without solicitation, getting all of it by prayer.—The account is so brief that the style is abrupt and not appealing. The tone of the narrative is not always good, speaking of prayer almost as a sort of routine business with God, a huckstering with Him: So much prayer for so much money. There are things for which Mueller (that is his name; he was a Prussian) stood that you cannot sanction, wrong views on Baptism, absolute refusal of a fixed salary and of saving for the future as unchristian, condemning the contracting of debts under any conditions, etc. Yet you may find the reading of the book stirring; I did.

THEO. HOYER

The Greatest Men of the Bible. By Clarence Edward Macartney. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, Nashville, Tenn. 222 pages, 5½×7¾. Price, \$1.50.

The first thing we must look for in reviewing a religious book is whether the author believes in the vicarious atonement. Dr. Macartney, minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, has that good reputation. In the preface of his book he says, "Early in my first pastorate, at the First Presbyterian Church, Paterson, New Jersey, I made the important homiletic discovery that the people like to hear sermons on Bible characters and that the preacher can preach on Bible characters more naturally, fluently, and practically than on any other subject.

"I recall what I heard a man of taste and distinction once say about his minister, who was an able man and preached carefully prepared sermons. This member of his congregation went regularly to church and waited faithfully on the preaching, the merit of which he freely acknowledged. But he said he would have much preferred that his minister, instead of laboring to be profound, or quoting other writers or speakers, or commenting on national and international affairs, had taken the old stories and the old characters of the Bible and with that for a start drawn some wholesome and timely lesson." (Pp. 5, 6.)

Yes, speaking on the "old stories and the old characters of the Bible" makes for profitable preaching. Our pastors will find much good thought and suggestive sermon material in Macartney's book. He gives character sketches of the following men of the Bible: Paul, David, Moses, John, Peter, Abraham, Joseph, Isaiah, Elijah, Samuel, John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Daniel, Joshua, and Job.

J. H. C. FRIZZ

The Soul-Winner's Fire. By Evangelist John R. Rice. The Sword of the Lord Publishers. Wheaton, Ill. 127 pages. Price, 20 cts.

The author describes the eight addresses on soul-winning contained in this brochure as "messages intended to fire the hearts of God's people and send them out with tears and holy passion to rescue the lost and bring them to know a crucified and risen Savior in forgiveness, peace, and eternal salvation." There is much truth in this striking characterization. The sermons on soul-winning are sincere, earnest, direct, and convincing appeals for soul-winning, from which also those can learn who do not fully agree with the author. The titles treated are: "He That Winneth Souls Is Wise"; "God's Way in Soul Winning"; "The Compassionate Heart"; "The Soul-Winner's Fire";

"Praying for Revival"; "Evangelistic Preaching"; "The Soul-Winner's Feet"; "Unsaved Brothers." The writer is a Baptist Fundamentalist and clearly professes the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, His blood atonement, and salvation by faith in Christ. His language is popular and, in general, dignified, though occasionally he makes use of slang. The book was published by the Bible Institute Colportage Association in their 20-cent series, but 5,000 copies were made for the author with his imprint.

J. THEODORE MUELLER

Faith Is the Answer. By Smiley Blanton, M.D., and Norman Vincent Peale, D.D. Published by Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York. 223 pages, 5½×8. Price, \$2.00.

Pastoral Psychology. By Karl R. Stolz, Ph.D., D.D. Published by Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York. 284 pages, 5¾×8¾. Price, \$2.50.

The flood of books on psychology, particularly pastoral psychology, has scarcely abated. Here is a recent book written by a pastor and a physician, and a revised edition of a book written in 1932 by the Dean of the Hartford School of Religious Education. We find pages upon pages of informative and instructive material. We learn about complexes and conflicts, about responses and adjustments, about the hidden energy of the mind and the power of faith. Blanton, the physician, tells us,

"Forgotten memories can retain their powerful hold in a peculiar way because the unconscious is timeless. It does not record the passing of events in the way the conscious mind does. Impulses repressed into the unconscious during infancy remain just as powerful after half a century as they were the day they were received" (p. 48).

This is part of the truth voiced in that mysterious word uttered almost 3,000 years ago by Solomon, "God hath set eternity (not: the world) in their heart," Eccl. 3:11. There is a good deal of truth in what Pastor Peale says,

"It is rarely possible to drive an idea from the mind merely by determining to do so, regardless of the strength of will which may be employed. Such a direct frontal attack is rarely successful, for that method only serves to fix the thought more firmly on the idea to be expelled, due to the emphasis laid upon it. The effective attack is an oblique one, displacing the sex urge by filling the mind with other engrossing interests. This cannot be done by mental effort alone, for thoughts are vagrant and not easily subjected to discipline and orderly control. The youth must energetically utilize physical, emotional, and mental energy in some activity of a worth-while nature. To the person under strong temptation this method may seem innocuous, but a sincere and persistent effort of this sort is sufficient. It does capture the interest and correspondingly abates temptation" (p. 200 ff).

A pastor ought to remember that when asked for advice in such cases. There are valuable suggestions in Prof. Stolz's chapters on Personality Types, Reconstruction of Adults, Pastoral Counseling, and others. But neither Pastor Peale, nor Physician Blanton, nor Dean Stolz seems to know that the "pastoral psychology" and the "faith" they are presenting is not the Christian faith nor the psychology of a Christian pastor. Dean Stolz tells us,

"The emotional emphasis has been shifted to the ethical love which Christ Himself both commended and exemplified. It is psychologically significant that ethical love has a rich emotional content. It brings all things under subjection to itself. We love Christ because he first loved an undeserving, albeit needy, world. On the Cross, so far from offering a sacrifice of blood and life to a vengeful deity, Christ lays bare the ethical love of the universe and demonstrates a passion for men which is stronger than death. Small wonder that Paul exclaims, 'The love of Christ constraineth us.' Loyalty to Christ moves in the direction of ethical power. Ethical love for Christ motivates not only sanity and sobriety but also active good will and intelligent social sympathy. Cynicism, skepticism, mockery, and cold-hearted criticism do not originate action which enlarges the individual or benefits society. 'Perfect love casteth out fear' and begets that confidence and assurance which makes personality reconstruction psychologically possible." (P.112.)

Pastor Peale informs us,

"One element in the adventure of self-discovery is to become aware of our innate goodness. Whether you are prepared to admit it or not, you are a good person basically. No man can go far in unworthy living without provoking the increasing protests of the finer self. It is impossible for any man long to escape the relentless challenge of the great personality in his soul. . . . In every weak person there is a strong person. In every evil person is a good person. In every defeated person is a victorious person. To become aware of this nobility and power within ourselves is to know and to be able to practice the Art of Living." (Pp.54,55.)

"Indeed, religion may be regarded as the formal statement of an instinctive good in human nature which is as natural as hunger." (P.107.)

And Physician Blanton states,

"There is a precept inherent in all religious teaching, that, if an individual seeks to better his life, there is definitely a way to do it. First, there must be a conviction of sin, or wrong-doing. Second, there must be repentance, or a desire to lead a better life. Third, restitution must be made to whoever has been injured or treated badly. Fourth, there must be atonement, self-punishment of some kind or other. Finally, the average person arrives at the point where he feels forgiven. He is then able to take up life again. Obviously, no one can go through life carrying the ever-mounting burden of a disapproving conscience." (P.93 f.)

He adds,

"Inability to arrive at a sense of forgiveness for unconscious impulses often results in morbid states of mind. Individuals who are virtuous and kind are sometimes completely possessed by a sense of guilt which they cannot shake off or repent away. They need to learn the workings of the unconscious mind which develops this morbid sense of guilt that makes them so unhappy. Without this understanding, religion is often of no avail." (P.95.)

In order to rid oneself of this morbid state of mind, Pastor Peale advises,

"Go to your minister or your priest or your rabbi or to your psychiatrist and unburden yourself. Tell everything that is on your heart, including your sins, real and imaginary, the haunting sense of guilt, and every suppressed desire. This confession, this unburdening

of yourself, will throw sunlight into every dark corner of the mind, drive out the shadows, bring blessed relief, and open the way for complete healing of the malady of anxiety." (P. 78.)

We ask, will such a confession rid us of sin and guilt of sin? A psychology such as this, if applied to a patient, may relieve his mind, may improve his physical condition, or effect a complete cure of certain ailments; it may even lull the conscience into a feeling of peace and succeed in silencing, at least for a while, perhaps for a lifetime, its accusing voice. One thing this psychology cannot do. It cannot take away one single sin, and sin still remains an infraction of God's commandment which damns, and damns eternally, unless it is removed by the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanses us from all sin. This is the only way to get rid of sin, Acts 4:12. All other remedies may afford some temporal relief but will utterly fail to save man from the wrath to come. We are sorry that the authors refuse to recommend this remedy and directly reject it as outmoded. This antagonism against the saving blood of Jesus marred the enjoyment experienced in reading the two volumes. TH. LAETSCH

Dictatorship in Pulpit and Pew. By J. E. Conant, D. D., Th. D. Published by Fundamental Truth Publishers, Findlay, Ohio. 36 pages, 5½×7½. Price, 20 cts.

Writing from the Reformed viewpoint, the author registers his protest against the usurpation of authority contrary to God's Word on the part of both pastor and people. He puts too much stress on the direct instruction of the Holy Spirit (pp. 11, 20, 25, etc.) and forgets that real unity of spirit can be attained only through the means of the written Word of God, through which the Spirit reveals God's will to mankind, a truth which the author himself teaches on page 28, but at times seems to forget. Our readers may find some useful arguments against usurping authority in the Church. TH. LAETSCH

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich.:

What About Church Suppers? By Pastor Johannes Hoifjeld. 72 pages, 5½×7½. Published by the author. Price, 50 cts.

Significant Women of the Bible. By A. C. Pease. 135 pages, 5½×7½. Price, \$1.00.

