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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.

Treasures from the Greek New Testament for the English Reader.
By Kenneth S. Wuest. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 136 pages, 5½×8. Price, \$1.00.

One need not hesitate to call this little work a worth-while book. Two features which place it far above most scholarly books produced today are its acceptance of the inerrancy and authority of the Scriptures and its clear proclamation of the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of the God-man Jesus Christ. The work concerns itself with little points of exegesis, which, however, since they pertain to the sacred text, are matters of importance for every Bible Christian. By dwelling on connotations of words like those translated "to visit" and "to forsake," the author endeavors to unfold the riches of the original to the English reader. Now and then, however, very weighty questions are discussed, for instance, in the chapter having the heading "Is Future Punishment Everlasting?" (P. 34.) The author here adheres to what the Scriptures say, the protests of sentimental reason notwithstanding.

But while the book in the main in its discussion of words and phrases, stressing matters of grammar and lexicography, sets forth Scripture doctrine, there are a few exceptions. My dissent was evoked by the millennial notions expressed on page 70, likewise by the assertion (p. 63) that the expression "son of man" quoted Heb. 2:6 from Ps. 8 is "a designation of the human race." When the author discusses the meaning of Baptism, he states, "It is the testimony of the person to the fact of his salvation. The only proper recipient of water baptism therefore is one who has received the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior and is trusting in His precious blood for salvation from sin" (p. 78). That statement evidently is too sweeping. In the case of an adult, of course, Baptism should be an indication that he or she has accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, but when an infant is baptized, such acceptance is not a thing to be presupposed but to be accomplished in the Sacrament. Likewise I would reject the author's view that when Paul in Rom. 6:3, 4 speaks of Baptism he has in mind the so-called baptism with the Holy Spirit (p. 84). The assumption is all the more strange because the Apostle in the whole context does not mention the Holy Spirit. In the discussion on the meaning of the word baptism (p. 84 ff.) scholarship suffers through the failure of the author to distinguish between *bapto* and *baptizo*. In spite of the close connection of the two words, it is hardly fair to ascribe to Homer and Xenophon the use of the latter when they merely employ the former. Prof. John A. Scott, who is introduced as an authority, I am sure, has been misquoted.

W. ARNDT

Reason or Revelation? By Theodore Engelder, D.D. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 176 pages, 5×7½. Price, \$1.00.

God's revelation as voiced and penned by the prophets and apostles of God has at all times been a stumbling-block and foolishness to human reason. When Paul preached the resurrection of Jesus, Festus bluntly told him that he had lost his reason, that he was insane, Acts 26:24. The philosophers in Athens mocked Paul and called him a babbler, a man who had hatched a crazy idea and was defending it in order to make a living or to secure a standing among the learned men or at least to gain some publicity. Yet Paul did not think of ceasing from proclaiming that Gospel which he knew to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. When Jeremiah wrote to his captive countrymen in Babylon the words which God had put into his mouth, Shemajah, one of their leaders, demanded that Jeremiah be put in prison and stocks as a madman, an insane fellow, Jer. 29:24-29. Yet Jeremiah could not cease from publishing the revelation of God, unreasonable though it might seem. God's Word was in his heart as a burning fire shut up in his bones, which he could not stay. Jer. 20:9. Man will resort to the greatest follies in his endeavor to silence the Word of revelation. Ahab would rather listen to four hundred flattering prophets of lies than to one prophet revealing to the wicked king truths he did not want to hear. And this one prophet disregarded the counsel of a well-meaning friend to be reasonable and to flatter like the rest, and suffered smiting and imprisonment rather than to put reason above revelation. 1 Kings 22.

The author of *Reason or Revelation?* is not like Paul or Jeremiah or Micah an inspired prophet, but like them he puts revelation where it belongs and reason in its proper place. He humbly submits to all that God has revealed by mouth and pen of prophets and apostles. He brings his reason into captivity to the obedience of Christ who has said, "Scripture cannot be broken." He proclaims as one of the first requisites of the Christian religion to believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, that it is true what Christ says, "Thy Word is truth." The author is fully aware that the princes of modern theology will take little or no notice of his book, and that if they do not disregard it entirely, they will ridicule the antiquated standpoint he takes and express their sorrow that he was born two or three centuries too late. The author does not seek honor with men. His sole purpose is to honor his God and the Word of the Lord of hosts, God's revelation, that Holy Bible written by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In a manner truly overwhelming he points out the folly, the sinfulness, the danger, the fatal consequences of permitting man's reason to sit in judgment on the Word of God, of granting permission to reason to rule over revelation. He exposes reason to be Satan's paramour, "the mistress of a thousand wiles" (p.148): the *inimica fidei*, the arch-enemy of faith, no matter whether she comes in the heavy armor of rationalistic philosophy, evolutionism, science, or blasphemous atheism; whether she comes clothed in the garment of Roman, or Reformed, or Fundamentalist argumentation; or whether she proudly raises the banner of scientific Lutheranism. Always and ever, by which name she is called, reason is

wily Satan's seductive consort, burning with passionate desire to rob the child of God of his faith and salvation.

We are happy that these chapters, originally written for and published in our *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, are not buried forever in its pages, that they are now being published in book form at an attractive price. We hope that all our pastors and teachers and laymen will read and study this book and derive profit from it.

THEO. LAETSCH

The Nature and Destiny of Man. A Christian Interpretation. I. Human Nature. By Reinhold Niebuhr. Charles Scribner's Sons. 306 pages, 5½×8½. Price, \$2.75.

This book is receiving high praise. "Not since the days of B.B. Warfield and Charles A. Briggs has America had a theologian who possessed such a grasp of the riches of the Christian theological tradition as does Reinhold Niebuhr. But Niebuhr—and here he is unlike Warfield and Briggs—possesses also an insight into the meaning of Christian doctrine for our own time and an appreciation of the relevance of the findings of modern knowledge for the fresh understanding of Christian truth and for the tasks of the Protestantism of our day" (J. L. Adams, in *Christendom* VI, No. 4, p. 576). And Georgia Harkness says: "This is by all odds the best book R. Niebuhr has written" (*Ibid.*, p. 567). Writers like Georgia Harkness, "in whom the philosopher and the Christian mingle" (Foreword to her book *The Faith by Which the Church Lives*), cannot but like Niebuhr's book, for in him, too, the philosopher and the theologian mingle, and the philosopher speaks much oftener than the theologian. And frequently, when a Bible-truth is presented, it is obscured and even warped by metaphysical and psychological constructions. Confining our review to the theological portions of the book, we will say that Niebuhr deals severely with several phases of liberal theology. He has no patience with those who "make the effort to maintain some contact with the traditional faith by affirming that Jesus was a very, very, very good man but that, of course, a better man might appear at a future date, in which case the loyalty of the faithful would be transferred to him." (P. 146.) And "modern liberal Protestantism knows less of the meaning or significance of the Atonement than the Middle Ages did." (P. 148.) Liberal Protestantism makes little of the Atonement, because it does not know the need of redemption from sin. "Albrecht Ritschl, the most authoritative exponent of modern liberal Christianity, does not appreciate . . . the uniqueness of the Biblical approach to the human problem. . . . The Biblical religion seeks redemption from sin." (P. 178.) Modernism does not realize the seriousness of sin. "Modern man has an essentially easy conscience. . . . The idea that man is sinful at the very center of his personality, that is, in his will, is universally rejected." (P. 23.) And "this complacent conscience of modern man," produced by his "inability to recognize the meaning of the dogma of original sin" (p. 93), needs to be awakened. That is the purpose of this book. It delivers smashing blows at the pride of man, does not hesitate to charge human nature with being corrupt, under the fearful wrath of God, and insists on "the logical

absurdity" of holding man responsible for his sins and sinfulness, helpless though he is. "The fact of responsibility is attested by the feeling of remorse or repentance which follows the sinful action." (P.255.) Man's reason may plead that he cannot be held responsible for what he cannot help doing, but his conscience tells him that his reasoning is wrong. And this "doctrine of sin which offends both rationalists and moralists by maintaining the seemingly absurd position that man sins inevitably but that he is nevertheless to be held responsible," this "doctrine which seems so untenable from a logical standpoint and has been derided and scorned not only by non-Christian philosophers but by many Christian theologians" (p.241 ff.) is unhesitatingly set forth in the theological sections of our book.

But Niebuhr hesitates when the question of *total depravity* and *inherited sin* is discussed. And thus his good work is to a great extent undone. He does not merely hesitate. He directly denies the Scriptural teaching on this point. He calls it a "literalistic error" that "the Augustinians insisted on interpreting original sin as an inherited taint" (p.260) and says that Christian theology has frequently expressed the idea of the total depravity of man in extravagant terms. "The most extreme statement of the doctrine of total depravity is probably found in the Lutheran Formulary of Concord, in which we read: 'They are also likewise repudiated and rejected who teach that our nature has indeed been greatly weakened but nevertheless has not altogether lost all goodness relating to divine and spiritual things.'" "Against pessimistic theories of human nature which affirm the total depravity of man it is important to assert the continued presence in man of the *justitia originalis*, of the law of love, as law and requirement." (Pp.260, 267 ff., 296.) — Similarly, Niebuhr tells the Liberals, who know less of the meaning of the Atonement than the Middle Ages did, that "this doctrine of Atonement and justification is the central truth of the Christian religion." He speaks of "the beauty of vicarious suffering" and does not hesitate to say that "God is Himself the victim of man's sin." But when he then tells the Liberals that "the good news of the Gospel is that God takes the sinfulness of man into Himself and overcomes in His own heart what cannot be overcome in human life," the Liberals will not at all hesitate to accept such a definition of vicarious atonement. (P.142 ff.)

The trouble with the theological sections of our book is that Scripture is not taken as the basis and the sole authority of religious teaching. Niebuhr feels at liberty, for instance, to deny the Bible account of the fall of man. He speaks of it consistently as "the myth of the Fall." "Christian theology has fallen into the literalistic error of insisting upon the Fall as an historical event." (P.267.) He will even go so far as to pen these words: "In Pauline theology death is the consequence of sin. . . . It is probable that St. Paul followed the rabbinic teaching of his day in the belief that death was the consequence of Adam's sin." (P.174.) Modern liberal Protestantism would call that a fine statement.

We have often wondered what truths, "what a profound prophetic philosophy of history" are hidden in this "myth of the Fall." Niebuhr

can tell us. Read pages 276—296. "If 'before the Fall' is not an historical period, the questions are: (1) Where is the locus of this perfection as requirement upon man; and (2) what is its character and content?" Answer: "Perfection before the Fall is perfection before the act." And what is this perfection, this what theology calls *justitia originalis*? Answer: "The original righteousness or perfection is present with sinful man as 'law.' . . . This righteousness is not completely lost in the Fall but remains with sinful man as the knowledge of what he ought to be, as the law of his freedom." Is that what Scripture means when it presents to us "the myth of the Fall"? Yes. "In placing the consciousness of 'original righteousness' in a moment of the self which transcends history, though not outside of the self which is in history, it may be relevant to observe that this conforms perfectly to the myth of the Fall when interpreted symbolically. . . . This is a symbol for the whole of human history." The ordinary reader may not understand the distinction between the self which transcends history and the self which is in history, but when Niebuhr summarizes his interpretation of the "myth of the Fall," we understand him perfectly. This is the summary: "Against pessimistic theories of human nature which affirm the *total depravity of man* [our italics], it is important to assert the continued presence in man of the *justitia originalis*, of the law of love, as law and requirement." "The disavowal of the historical-literalistic illusion, which places the original perfection of man in a period before an historical fall, thus clarifies and corrects both Catholic and Protestant thought. Against Protestant thought it becomes possible to maintain that the image of God is preserved in spite of man's sin." That we understand perfectly. Human nature is, according to Niebuhr, not as bad as Luther and Augustin and Paul painted it. And so the good work of Niebuhr is altogether undone. He set out to awaken the complacent conscience of modern man. But telling it that man is not totally depraved lulls it back into sleep.

TH. ENGELDER

What Is Christianity? By Charles Clayton Morrison. Willett, Clark and Co., Chicago, Ill. 324 pages, 5¾×8½. Price, \$3.00.

In this volume, at present widely discussed by liberals and conservatives, Dr. Morrison, well-known modernist editor of *The Christian Century*, investigates the essence of Christianity, but this only as the means to an end, as he shows at the close of his book. Unlike Harnack (Kant) and other older Rationalists, he does not regard Christianity substantially as morality; and unlike traditional Christian theology he does not consider Christianity to consist basically in faith in Christ or in any specific Christian creed, for to him distinctive creeds are only so many "ideologies" (essentially unchristian by their very existence as such, since like ancient Gnosticism they "take Christianity out of history.") (Cf. p. 24 ff.) To Morrison Christianity is God's self-disclosure in history, yet not in a supernatural way, as divine revelation is professed also by traditional Christian theology, but "by so orientating the community toward Himself that it can perceive and receive the particular event as revelation" (p. 77). "History is the human medium of God's creative action, or conversely, the field of divine creativity in

which man takes his human part as a coworker with God" (p.79). Morrison endeavors to make this thought clear by the analogy of the building of a house, in which act by the exercise of intelligence and labor, man cooperates with divine powers which hold stone and board in place, or by that of the plowing and sowing which the farmer does, trusting in God to give the increase. (Cf. p.81.) "This conscious orientation," Morrison claims, "toward the prevenient and transcending creativity of God in the entire continuum of events is Christian faith" (p.81). Christianity has so come into existence in Old Testament Judaism and in New Testament communal activity, for here and here alone (Morrison excludes all pagan sects from sharing in Christianity's prerogative) there was "conscious orientation toward divine creativity." Now, the visible community in which there is such conscious orientation toward God, is the "body of Christ," which is nothing else than the visible, tangible community, calling itself the Christian Church. Against this visible body of Christ Romanism has sinned by becoming guilty of schism, so revealing itself as the great apostasy. (Cf. p.199.) But also Protestantism has sinned against this body of Christ, for it has placed the locus of revelation in the Bible and the locus of salvation in the inner life [?] of the individual Christian. (Cf. p.200.) In other words, it has taken the Bible as the divine revelation and so it has taken Christianity out of history. There is no heresy in the traditional sense of the term. "Heresy is sin, not because the heretical doctrine is wrong but because the heretic is wrong. And he is wrong, not because he holds convictions which diverge from the generally accepted formulation of the Church's creed, but because he pushes his divergent views to the point of dividing the Christian community" (p.312). The Church's great objective, then, is to become united externally, so that the body of Christ may no longer remain dismembered. The traditional external forms of Christian expression — church order, baptism, ordination, Christian missions, Christian education, liturgy, the Eucharist, and even creeds (for all of which Morrison gives detailed directions) — may be retained. However, there must not be any heretical (separatistic) emphasis on any distinctive form, for here the "catholic functions of the Christian community" must be exercised, determining the "normative ideology" [i. e., the creed] of the community. At present, none of the existing denominations (least of all, the Roman Catholic because of its demand of obedience) can qualify for serving as Morrison's creedless, faithless, Gospel-less "body of Christ," though he admits that the "Church of England has recently given an enlightening illustration of the application of the catholic principle in the sphere of the Church's beliefs," since there "no attempt was made to raise the doctrine as a basis of fellowship" (p.315), its "statement of Christian doctrine being oriented to fellowship, not toward schism." Morrison, then, regards as Christianity the community which is "conscious of divine revelation," even though it does not accept the Bible as God's revelation and the Christian faith as the way of salvation. Really, it was not at all necessary for Morrison to write his basically antichristian, pagan monograph, for what he advocates is already put into practice in the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America,

in the various syncretistic, modernistic "union churches" all over the country, and in the present-day, unionistic church-union movements, championed especially by Anglicanism. If Morrison's book has any objective, it is to get rid of the last vestige of Bible veneration as the divine rule of faith and life and of the last insistence upon Christian creeds, still maintained by Fundamentalist sectarianism; for these impede the unchristian union-movement now contemplated by Modernists, which is to say, the utter paganization of Christendom under the disguise of external Christian forms and formulas. Just how this Christless, Bibleless, creedless pagan "body of Christ" is to function, well, that is quite another story; for that Morrison has no recipe. Modernism only destroys, never builds up.

J. THEODORE MUELLER

Amerikanischer Kalender fuer deutsche Lutheraner auf das Jahr 1942.

Literarischer Redakteur: Dr. J. T. Mueller. Statistischer Redakteur: Rev. S. Michael. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. 208 pages. Price, 15 cts.

Lutheran Annual, 1942. Literary Editor: Dr. J. T. Mueller. Statistical Editor: Rev. S. Michael. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. 208 pages. Price, 15 cts.

These two publications need neither introduction nor recommendation, especially at the late date when this comes to the hand of the reader. But the remark of the editor in the *Kalender* (in an article describing the work necessary for the production of these publications) that in each succeeding year the statistical material is increased, while reading matter is reduced, sent the writer to the encyclopedia and a long discussion on the subject "Almanacs." It is a long story, reaching back to the time of the ancient Greeks. Even then the contents were fundamentally the same: A calendar of the divisions of the year, the times of various astronomical phenomena, and other useful and entertaining information, which in the time of the "prophetic" almanacs ran greatly to astrological predictions and other similar absurdities. Laws became necessary to check the circulation of such deleterious pamphlets; and for the same purpose more useful almanacs were compiled, by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in England, by Benjamin Franklin in America, etc. Christian calendars were published for the purpose of displacing such harmful productions with something better and more beneficial; hence, the reading matter played a great part in these books. In our own almanacs this purpose is almost lost; only 24 of the 208 pages are given to educational and devotional material. The reason for this is, of course, not that we disregard the need of such material, but that there are many and better ways today for providing it. But the statistical section in our annuals has become more useful with each new edition. This time the list of institutions (universities, hospitals) served by our pastors has been greatly increased. It is noted also that the historical data following each date in the calendar are often changed, so that the owner of a collection of succeeding annuals will have quite a selection of significant dates in Lutheran Church history.— A copy of one of these booklets is, of course, an absolute necessity in every home in the Synodical Conference.

THEO. HOYER