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## Book Review. - Literatur

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**Book Review — Literatur**


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

**The Book of Jonah. A Message for Our Day.** By H. Speckhard. Translated by R. Herrmann. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 75 pages, 5×7½. Price, 25 cents.

This little volume consists of two parts, a thirteen-page introduction, followed by an interpretation of the Prophet's Book. In the former section are taken up the questions of authenticity, historicity, authorship, the time of Jonah's activity, and a brief summary of the purpose of the Book. All this is presented in clear and simple language, avoiding almost completely such terms as would presuppose technical and linguistic knowledge. In the interpretation of the Book light is thrown upon the text from every angle that might prove helpful to bring about a clearer understanding and appreciation of the story. As the subtitle already suggests, the facts and lessons of the Book are shown to be thoroughly applicable to our modern times. In ancient Nineveh conditions prevalent in our large modern cities are seen to be closely paralleled, and Jonah's call to repentance is essentially the same as is needed at any time to recall the sinner from his headlong course to destruction. All questions arising in connection with the interpretation of the Book are simply and satisfactorily answered without recourse to the Hebrew original, which makes the volume a most valuable addition to the available literature suited for use in Bible classes and for private Bible study by our laity. Needless to say, the pastor, too, may derive many a useful thought for his sermons from this study by the sainted Pastor Speckhard, an outstanding theologian and preacher in our Synod. Thanks are due Pastor Herrmann for making this gem available in the English language. While, of course, it is impossible to reproduce in English the smooth flow of the language in which the essay was originally written, Pastor Herrmann's translation represents a very creditable achievement. The volume is easy to read except in a few isolated instances, and the fascinating presentation keeps the reader's interest alive to the very conclusion. Widespread reading of this essay will prove a great blessing and stimulate Biblical study in our circles.

G. V. SCHICK

**Duties of Elders.** Written by request of Synod's Literature Board. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo. 12 pages, 4×6¼. Price, 5 cents.

This twelve-page tract written at the request of Synod's Literature Board outlines briefly the Biblical background of the office of elders, their duties in general, and finally gives a few directions for the treatment of special cases, such as non-attendance at the church services, worldliness, irreconcilability, lack of liberality in giving, neglect of the Christian home. Every congregation ought to give a copy of this tract to its

elders. It would be well to discuss the paragraphs in the congregational meetings so that the voting members would learn why they are to respect their elders and what they are to expect of them. TH. LAETSCH

**The Christian Interpretation of Sex.** By Otto A. Piper. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York. 234 pages, 5¾×8¼. \$2.00.

In the Editorial and News Department of *The Presbyterian* of Feb. 26, 1942, we find the following item on the author of this book: "On Monday afternoon, February 9, in Miller Chapel of Princeton Theological Seminary, Dr. Otto A. Piper, guest professor of New Testament, was installed into the Helen H. P. Manson Chair of New Testament Literature and Exegesis. . . . Until 1933, Dr. Piper was professor of Theology in the University of Muenster, Germany, where he succeeded the famous Karl Barth. Deposed from his chair by the Nazi authorities at the beginning of the Hitler regime, Dr. Piper spent four years in England. He is regarded as one of the most outstanding theological scholars of our time and is the author of many books in German and English. His English works to date are: *Recent Developments in German Thought*, *God in History*, *The Christian Interpretation of Sex.*"

The last named book purports to give a Christian interpretation of sex. In the preface the author writes, "Our philosophy of sex and sex morality must be based exclusively on the Bible." (P. ix.) We subscribe to that. Yet the author has not succeeded in ridding himself of the fetters of the unbiblical theory of evolution of religion, and therefore we read in his chapter on "Genesis of Modern Views": "Before the time of the prophets, the religion depicted in the Old Testament (e.g., Leviticus 20) appears to have regarded sex from the standpoint of a dynamistic concept of reality similar to the idea of 'mana.' . . . Among the Hebrews in pre-prophetic days the view of sex, similar to that held by the other Semitic tribes, shows all the characteristics of a mana-tabu religion." (P. 7.) In the age of the prophets "a legalistic ethic resting on ceremonies, ritual, and institutions was replaced by an ethic of moral virtue. This change had a profound influence, not only on the regulation of sex life, but also on the way sex was understood." (P. 11.) "It came to be understood that the core of sex relationships can be fully realized only when there is faithfulness and love; and this new understanding reacted upon the relation between the worshiper and Yahweh," (p. 12); yet what we read Gen. 2:18, 23-25 already expresses this last truth perfectly and that in the beginning of time and the first book of the Bible.

On the other hand, the author rests solidly on Scripture when he writes, "The story of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (Gen. 2:21 f.) makes it plain that, in this instance, man and woman are regarded as essentially belonging to each other. Sexual intercourse is, therefore, not an accidental and temporary event in the life of two persons; rather, it institutes a genuine unity ordained by God for that purpose. . . . In those far-off days, men were conscious that the sexes conditioned each other in some way. They felt that when a divine requirement had been fulfilled, a corresponding change was occasioned in man's being, quite apart from the question whether the person concerned had become conscious of a feeling of harmony or not." And again, "Moreover,

according to this early view, the physical and the mental differences of the two sexes point to some deeper-going difference, viz., that of natural status and of the human functions of man and woman. This difference affects all departments of their life. Even the empirical thinker is more inclined today than twenty years ago to grant that in no respect can a woman be man's equal, or man a woman's. At the primitive [?] stage of religion, as reflected in Genesis 2 and 3, people saw a clear sign of this difference; for instance, in the woman's two-sided character, as one who could be tempted, and who could become a temptation to man." (pp. 9, 10.)

We agree with the author when he writes, "In normal circumstances, no other human instinct expresses itself with such overwhelming force as that of sex. The Bible takes account of that fact. It does not assume that it is within human choice whether one should have sexual excitements or not. On the contrary, the Bible regards it as a special gift of God if a person does not feel the power of that instinct (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7); similarly, Jesus' saying about those who make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 19:12) is probably intended in the same sense. Paul, indeed, adopts the standpoint that, in ordinary circumstances, it is impossible for adults effectively to suppress the desire for sexual satisfaction, and, from this standpoint, he recommends marriage. On the basis of a similar conviction Paul advises married people not to abandon sexual intercourse for too long a time (1 Cor. 7:5).

"This does not mean that the Bible regards an unmarried man or woman, in normal circumstances, as incapable of curbing the sex instinct. Yet the Bible recognizes that for the average individual there is a limit beyond which he is not in a position to prevent the rise of sexual desire towards another person. This does not imply that such a person is under a physiological necessity to have sexual intercourse. But the individual begins to burn, to suffer from lust (1 Cor. 7:9), i. e., he can never get free of the wish to have sexual intercourse with a certain person. This wish may be expressed in various ways, sexual fantasies, pleasure in lascivious thoughts, or self-abuse. From the standpoint of the New Testament, all these activities are as damnable as actual immoral relations with another person, because like them they include an unjustified desire for sexual intercourse with a certain person." (Pp. 38 and 39.) Yet we cannot subscribe to all he says on the meaning of the Hebrew term to *know*, used to describe the act of sexual intercourse. He says, "Three points are peculiar to knowledge obtained by sexual experience: (a) it is strictly personal knowledge, (b) its subject matter consists in the mutual relationship between the two parties, (c) it is knowledge of an inner secret," (p. 54), and concludes his remarks on point 2 by stating, "What was impossible to communicate by means of words is transmitted by the mutual affection concomitant to sexual union. Sexual contact is not yet effected as long as only one person is prepared to tune himself in harmony with another. If the other does not respond all that takes place is a psycho-physical excitement of the first person concerned," (p. 56). There is no indication in Scripture that this "knowledge" must be based on mutual affection

or that only such knowledge makes them one flesh. On the contrary, according to Scripture sexual intercourse with a harlot makes the two one flesh, 1 Cor. 6:15, 16, and there may be very little of "tuning oneself in harmony with the other," in fact, that may be the rule rather than the exception with the professional harlot.

"Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28 and Gen. 9:1) is not to be interpreted as a commandment (as if a person had it in his power to produce life), but just as in the parallel passages (Gen. 1:22 and 9:7), as a blessing spoken by God, addressed to the creatures of sea and air, and later to Noah," (p. 51). By the same logic we may conclude that the word of Christ, Disciple all nations, Matt. 28:19, is not to be interpreted as a command, as if a person had it in his power to produce spiritual life! The words "Be fruitful and multiply" are imperatives, just as the "matheteusate" is an imperative. That these imperatives confer a blessing does not make them any less commands.

The author stands firmly on Scriptural ground when he writes, "The constitutive factor in marriage is not the public and legal act of our present regulations, but the will of the two persons to live together. The public and legal act is only a kind of outward declaration which the two give that they wish their bond to be regarded as formed in the eyes of all. On the other hand it is a declaration on the part of the State that to this union are granted all the special privileges of a legal marriage. But in God's sight the marriage was concluded at the moment when the two persons gave consent in their hearts to their mutual desires. Hence even the ceremony in church does not make the marriage more in accordance with God's will than it was before the solemnization. The ceremony is only God's blessing pronounced upon this bond as a Christian bond in the eyes of the Church," (p. 168). But we cannot accept his statement "that from the ethical viewpoint the life of an unmarried couple might under certain circumstances have the same value as that of life in an externally contracted marriage. It is true that in all probability their union would imply birth control." (P. 170.) His position on "birth control" is not based on the Word of God, but to too great an extent on expediency; and carnal intercourse on the part of betrothed persons before their public marriage would be, apart from other considerations, contrary to the laws of the State, therefore a sin against God's commandment, Rom. 13:1-5 and 1 Pet. 2:13, 14.

The author's remarks on celibacy, based on Matt. 19:12 (p. 108 ff.), on marital love and faithfulness (pp. 119-138), on the knowledge and burden of sin and the Gospel of forgiveness, offer rich food for thought and are worthy of careful study even if one cannot agree with all statements, and his view of sin does not do full justice to God's description of it, and his Gospel of forgiveness seems not to be based on the vicarious atonement of Christ, of which we have found no mention.

While the author frequently reads his own views and opinions into the words of Scripture, the book will serve to stimulate a careful examination of one's own opinions and a thorough and conscientious comparison of one's own and the author's views with the infallible oracles of God.

TH. LAETSCH

**Bible Quiz Programs. Eight Full Programs of Fun and Excellent Bible Instruction.** By Mabel H. Hansen. Zondervan Publishing House. 45 pages,  $5\frac{1}{4} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ . Price, 25 cents.

**Some Hints for Fruitful Bible Study.** By Charles G. Finney. 27 pages. Same publisher, format, and price.

These two pamphlets are intended to stimulate the study of the Bible. We frankly do not like the word "fun" in the subtitle of the first pamphlet, which is arranged very much like that by Moehlmann, recently referred to in these columns. If contests of this kind are kept serious and dignified, they may still serve their purpose very well, which is that of adding interest to Bible hours in either young people's meetings or vacation Bible schools, as the author suggests. The programs are of somewhat unequal merit, and not all questions relate to Bible topics, but the careful leader of Bible hours will be able to make selections which will best serve his purpose.—The book containing suggestions for Bible study by Finney was reprinted, as the publishers state, "in the interests of the Finney Sesquicentennial Memorial Conference," scheduled to be held in Chicago at the end of June. Among the many excellent hints for Bible students we marked rather heavily one which is placed under the heading "Some of the Advantages to Be Derived," namely this one: "A constantly increasing sense of your own ignorance." In the measure in which the student of the Bible will realize his own ignorance and turn to the guidance of the Holy Spirit alone will he derive lasting benefits from his study of the Book.

P. E. KRETZMANN

**After the Resurrection—What?** By L. R. Scarborough, D. D., President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids. 121 pages,  $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{4}$ . Price, \$1.00.

It is no disparagement to this book to call it a mission tract. It is a fine mission tract. It is a study of the dealings of Christ with His disciples in the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension and stresses the missionary obligation which Christ laid upon His Church. There are some fanciful illustrations and applications, a few obscurities, and two or three doctrinal aberrations, as, for instance, the statement that Baptism does not save (p.117), but the book serves very well to impress upon us the duty and privilege of imparting to others the salvation gained through Christ's atonement for the sins of the world and enjoyed by us. "God's people must pass God's spiritual food to all classes and ages of men. There is much that rests on our hearts which is described by the debtorship of love. God's other name is Love, and He desires of us love's service. When we look at Christ's emphasis on the mission obligations in the light of love's debtorship, it becomes a mammoth affair and ought not to be shirked nor dodged nor disregarded. God allows no shift in love's obligation. Looking back over the grave and cross and Garden and the price He paid, love's redemption price, He certainly had a right to ask you and me and all of His disciples this question, 'Lovest thou Me more than these?' And one of His ascension expectations of all of us is that we seek to pay love's eternal debtorship." (P.77.)

TH. ENGELDER