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## Book Review. - Literatur

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## Book Review

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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 18, Mo.

**Religion as Experience and Truth.** An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion. By Warren Nelson Nevius, D.D., Professor of Bible and Religion, Wilson College, Chambersburg, Pa. (Presbyterian). The Westminster Press. 438 pages, 5½×8. Price, \$3.00.

Is it worth while to study a book like this which treats of religion not on the basis of Holy Scripture, but in the light of reason and philosophy? Edwin Lewis finds that "as a textbook it is almost exactly right. College students in the throes of uncertainty will find here an answer to many of their questions. And more mature minds, who may claim some familiarity with the questions discussed, will be grateful to have the field so ably surveyed. It is difficult to think of a question relevant to the general problem of religion to which Dr. Nevius does not give careful consideration." It is certainly worth while to know what the philosophers, from Aristotle down to Kant and the present day, have thought about religion. And the perplexed college student will find some relief in what Dr. Nevius tells him about the various philosophies and religions. If he should be perturbed, for instance, by the dogmatic assertions and asseverations of the atheistic philosophers and scientists, he should study Chapter Eight: "The Breakdown of Scientific Naturalism." "On its own showing scientific naturalism is attempting to be dogmatic about matters which it cannot possibly know." "The confessed breakdown of the entire materialistic and mechanical explanation of nature on the part of present-day science. . . R. A. Millikan: 'The childish mechanical conceptions of the nineteenth century are now grotesquely inadequate.' . . . Today, as R. F. A. Hoernle remarks, 'we know too much about matter to be materialists.'" "The failure of the naturalistic philosophy to explain the phenomenon of life." "To account for consciousness or mind in mechanical terms is a plain impossibility." Again, "the rationalist or deist view of religion, popularized in the eighteenth century, raises more difficulties than it solves." (P. 54.)

The college student (and the immature seminary student) who feels inclined to sneer when the professor of theology frankly confesses that he is unable to solve the many mysteries of the Christian religion should let the philosophers, including the religious philosophers, tell him that they must make similar confessions; nay, the case of the philosopher is worse than that of the Christian theologian. "What we term scientific knowledge is circumscribed in exactly the same way" as in the religious knowledge. "All such scientific knowledge is limited. At no stage can we assert that the mind has apprehended all that exists. It is acknowledged that the ultimate essence of the divine nature is past finding out." (P. 173 f.) "In all likelihood creation must remain the ultimate mystery. As human beings we are totally incapable even of imagining what such creativity implies." (P. 320.) "The problem of evil

represents the unsolved mystery of all religion and *philosophy*." (P. 329.) "The difficulty encountered in every attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty with the free will of man . . . must remain one of the unsolved mysteries of our *philosophical* and religious thinking." (P. 117.) Again and again our religious philosopher is forced to make the confession of the theologian Paul: "'We know in part.' . . . 'How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out.'" (Pp. 174, 329.) And in some respects the Christian theologian makes a better showing before the bar of reason than the atheistic and deistic philosopher. For instance: "The world order cannot be rationally interpreted save as we recognize in it the active participation of a personal spiritual Being who possesses both intelligence and will." (P. 328.)

The seminary students and graduated theologians who imagine that the teachings of the Bible on the inner life of the Christian must be squared with the laws set up in their textbooks of psychology should study Chapter Five: "The Psychology of Religion." "The term 'religious psychology,' it must be admitted, has been overworked and has frequently been held to warrant a quasi-scientific investigation of almost everything in religious consciousness. . . . It must be said that confidence in any procedure of this sort is largely misplaced. Religion, as experience, is *sui generis* and unique. . . . These things—man's religious emotions, beliefs, and volitions—cannot be reduced to the terms of a formula. . . . As Pratt correctly remarks, "The psychologist who starts out on the assumption that every religious phenomenon is completely and ultimately explained by psychological law, would be like a physicist who failed to recognize that there are gaps within his field."

The college student and the mature theologian can thus gain some profit by the study of this text book of religious philosophy. It is, however, altogether worthless as a textbook of religion. It is not based on the Bible. The publishers tell us on the jacket: "Dr. Nevius believes that since the book deals with the philosophical background of religion only, little needs to be said in it about the Christian revelation." Take, for instance, the statement on page 383: "Save in the case of the resurrection of Jesus Christ—and any discussion of *this belongs to the field of the Christian religion*—no living soul has come back from beyond the grave and made its presence known in an unequivocal way." The truth concerning the resurrection of Christ and the immortality of the soul is not presented to the college student as a Bible truth. (The resurrection of the body is not mentioned at all.) Nor is any other distinctive truth of the Christian religion discussed. College students will find here an answer to many of their questions, but no answer is given to the most serious questions that disturb the religious college student.

Can he not, then, go to the Bible theologian for the answer? If he has assimilated the spirit of this book, he will be suspicious of the method of the Bible theologian. This textbook of religious philosophy places reason above revelation. It rejects the teaching of gross rationalism, indeed. "Revelation to the deist—the rationalistic school—is essentially the gift of human reason." (P. 311.) It holds that a divine revelation is needed. But it denies that religion—the Christian religion—is a divine creation. Taking the position of theistic evolution-

ism, it holds that religion—including the Christian religion—is the product of man, helped along and directed by some sort of divine revelation. "It follows," we read on page 198, "that the human reason is fully warranted in investigating religious truth. . . . To assume for a moment that the adventure in search of religious truth means abandoning the light of man's rational nature and constructing a thesis that rests on feeling or on faith alone, is not only to misrepresent religion . . . it is to fly in the face of the inexorable demand of the mind itself." There is certainly no essential difference between this position and that of the rationalistic school. According to both, reason is supreme.—The position Dr. Nevius takes is not reasonable. On page 231 he asserts that "by its very nature the concept 'God' is a concept transcending human reason," and now he asserts that the human reason is fully warranted in testing the revelation God gives!—Can a textbook on religion which imbues the college student with the notion of the supremacy of reason serve as an introduction to the study of theology?

One of the major problems that disturb the college student and the seminary student is that concerning free will. If he accepts the answer here given, he will be totally unfit for the study of Christian theology. Dr. Nevius asserts the freedom of the will in spiritual matters. He cannot but do so, seeing that he permits reason to investigate and test God's revelation. Reason refuses to accept the teaching of Holy Scripture that while the natural man freely chooses the evil, he is unable to think and do the good. The rationalist insists that this teaching of Scripture violates the moral nature of man and that only the Pelagianistic-synergistic teaching, which ascribes spiritual powers to the natural man, can conserve his worth and dignity. The religious philosophers declare: "In the spiritual world there is authority, but not compulsion." (P. 287.) The Christian theologians say the same. What is effected by compulsion has no spiritual worth. But there is this difference between the religious philosopher and the Christian theologian that while the former insists that unless free will is ascribed to man, conversion, for instance, would have to be effected by compulsion, the latter knows that while conversion is effected by God alone, God converts *by making the unwilling willing*. But the rationalist will not accept this Biblical solution of the difficulty; that would again be giving God all the glory and leaving nothing to man.—Make reason your guide and you will glorify free will. Our textbook does that. "God's purpose is to educate and fashion finite spirits, through free efforts, into the status of children of God." Man's "free and untrammled power to do right and defy the wrong." "Character is created through the free choice of the highest moral values." "The actual existence of moral evil is due to the free choice of man, and it is the supreme business of the latter to eliminate it." "God provided the opportunity for finite spirits to advance toward perfection through their own self-wrought intelligence and free will." On conversion: "Conversion may be defined as the process of attaining maturity in religious experience. It is the complete and full-orbed orientation of a man's or woman's selfhood to the basic facts which religion implies, resulting in a deliberate adjustment and surrender of one's own personality and will to God and in wholehearted dedication to his service."

On faith: "Faith is the expression of the active side of our nature and is a mark of a purposive and forward-looking mind; it denotes the practical response of the spiritual self to its own inner needs and demands." (Pp.133, 192, 342, 347, 354, 363, 393.)— On the all-important question of conversion the college student gets the wrong answer.

TH. ENGELDER

**Liberal Theology. An Appraisal. Essays in Honor of Eugene William Lyman.** David E. Roberts and Henry Pitney Van Dusen, Editors. Charles Scribner's Sons. 285 pages, 6×9. Price, \$2.50.

Here is a book which no one who is interested in modern liberal theology dare overlook, and though it was written in 1942, it is still new enough to bring to the attention of our readers. It is published in honor of the late liberal Eugene William Lyman, to whom it is dedicated in a special essay, composed by W. M. Horton. This essay forms the first part of the book. A second part treats the "History of Liberal Theology" and a third, the "Foundations of Liberal Theology." All contributors are ranking liberals, and their essays show deep learning, but also as it appears to the orthodox Christian reviewer, the grossest darkness in spiritual matters. The reviewer was most attracted by the essays on the "Christian Conception of Man" (J. C. Bennett), the "Significance of Jesus Christ" (H. P. Van Dusen), "The Scriptures" (Henry Sloane Coffin), "Eternal Life" (D. C. Macintosh), and "The Church" (W. A. Brown). While not in agreement with any of the liberal views and trends set forth in the book, the reviewer is grateful to the contributors that for the most part they have written in reasonably clear and simple language, so that their essays can be understood without too much trouble. Today Liberalism, of course, is out of date. At least it cannot continue in the form in which it was enunciated during the past decades, for there is a swing back to orthodoxy in theological circles, and churches are demanding more positive truth than Liberalism has given them in the past. Nevertheless, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America is still fundamentally liberal, and to understand the men that direct its thought, one must know what ranking liberals of the type of Lyman, Bennett, Brown, Coffin, Hocking, Horton, Jones, Macintosh, McGiffert, Montague, Moore, and others stood for. As the essays show, Liberalism has but one theology: the dethronement of God and the enthronement of man. Substantially it is pantheistic. Its *modus vivendi* is salvation by works, if indeed salvation is necessary, for the agnosticism of many liberals does not even allow heaven to exist. In one of the essays John C. Bennett writes: "Man's mind is capable of endless questioning" (p.196). Just that depicts Liberalism in its theological functioning: endless questioning without arriving at definite answers. Nor does it want to, for "theology is not in the attainment of truth, but in the search after truth." Nor can it, since human reason has no answers for the questions that concern the spiritual and heavenly verities about which the Holy Bible speaks so fully and so comfortingly and so divinely. That is why liberal theology will always go down again, no matter how popular it may have been, and why Christianity will always come up again, no matter how hard the fight was which it had to wage against infidelity. "Thy Word is Truth."

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

**The History of Quakerism.** By Elbert Russell. The Macmillan Company, New York. 589 pages, 5¼×8. Price, \$3.00.

Dr. Russell, dean emeritus of the Divinity School at Duke University—the well-known Methodist university—has been prominently identified with the history of American Quakerism during the last half century. Prior to his coming to Duke University, he was director of the Quaker Woolman School at Swarthmore and special lecturer of the American Friends Service Committee. The author has examined the voluminous literature on the Quaker movement, especially the historical studies of John W. Rowntree and Rufus M. Jones, and presents all the salient material in this one volume under three main headings: The Rise of the Society, 1647—1691; The Age of Quietism, 1691—1827; The Modern Revival and Reconstruction, 1827—1941. The many controversies among the Quakers are described in detail, and the church historian will find the source material which will enable him to understand the basic principles of Quakerism. The chapter on the "Principles of Friends" is of special interest to the theologian. While it is impossible to fix the doctrines of Quakers, since the very nature of Quakerism is the theory of the "inner light," nevertheless a clear definition of the Quaker "inner light" will enable one to understand the Quakers' views concerning theology and sociology. Dr. Russell summarizes the views on the "inner light" as follows: "The Inner Light represented (to early Quakers) an experience rather than a theological 'notion.' (1) It stood for God as knowable to and within man. God is immanent in the world and in man, and so may be inwardly known to every man. (2) It meant also the capacity in all men to perceive, recognize, and respond to God. All men and all women are potentially children of God of equal value in His sight. (3) It was also a designation for man's whole experience of God. The central Quaker faith was a testimony that man may live in vital contact with the divine Life-stream and that the divine stream of Life can flow into expression through men." (Pp. 48—53.) Quakerism is, of course, a type of mysticism. Dr. Russell calls our attention to a noteworthy distinction between the mysticism of Roman Catholics and of Quakers: the former is individual, the latter is a social mysticism, i. e., "the will of God is known most fully in corporate experience, and the inner light is apprehended most clearly in social worship." (Pp. 55, 154.) There is no doubt that the peculiar view of the Quaker Inner Light influenced not only their theology, but their anthropology as well, and this theory is the key to the Quakers' deep interest in their fellow man's temporal welfare and their vigorous campaigns for social reforms. Noteworthy in this volume are also the sections dealing with the impacts of the Holiness Movement of the 19th century and of Liberal Theology on Quakerism. The former led to changes in doctrine and practice, particularly inasmuch as it introduced Arminianism and holiness preaching; the latter, a reaction to the Holiness Movement, resulted in a complete "liberalizing" of Quaker religious thinking. This was accomplished in a large measure by America's outstanding mystic, Rufus M. Jones, since 1893 professor of philosophy at the Quaker college at Haverford, Pa. At present the Quakers are working toward a union of the various

"meetings" on a broad modernistic and liberal theological platform. Since our author has had a prominent part in this movement, he describes this phase of Quaker history with keen insight. The same holds true of the chapter dealing with the Quakers' work of relief and reconstruction in war-torn Europe. This is indeed a notable humanitarian achievement, when one considers that there are only 116,090 Friends in the U.S.A. and that the world population of Quakers is only 163,135.

F. E. MAYER

**Report of the Twenty-sixth Regular Convention of the Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church.** 100 pages, 6×9. Price, 50 cents.

Our brethren of the small Norwegian Synod are carrying on with sturdy courage. This comprehensive report gives the reader a fine insight into the work of this branch of the Synodical Conference and the dogged, yet cheerful perseverance of a numerically small, yet spiritually strong group. In addition to the customary report regarding recommendations and resolutions we have here the President's message, the festival address at the Jubilee Synod, and, above all, three fine doctrinal essays on *Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Gratia*, *Sola Fide*, the powerful slogans, or mottoes, of the Lutheran Church. Brief as these essays are, they convey the truth in forceful form and will serve to strengthen many who may have their misgivings about the future of the Lutheran Zion in America. Among the recommendations of the convention there is one in particular which will have to be studied carefully, namely, one which "entreats the Missouri Synod at its forthcoming convention to revoke 'The St. Louis Articles of Union,' and thus let the 'Brief Statement' stand unqualified and unsullied as our clear and joint confession." P. E. KRETZMANN

**Is This the Church of Jesus Christ?** By F. E. Schumann. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. 29 pages, 3½×5¾. Paper cover tract. Price, 10 cents.

As pastor of our church at Salt Lake City the Rev. Schumann has been dealing with the preposterous claims of Mormonism for many years, and this tract represents the ripe fruit of his experience in examining and refuting such Mormon beliefs as polytheism, the pre-existence of the soul, polygamy, the authenticity of the Book of Mormon, celestial marriage. While the tract is intended primarily for mass distribution in the "Mormon country," it will prove its value also in those sections where Mormon missionaries surreptitiously enter our congregations and where the pastor must have a compendium of Mormon doctrines and the Scripture refutation.

F. E. MAYER

**On Wings of Faith.** 152 pages. 25 cents each. **On Runways of Love.** 128 pages. 25 cents each. Department of Missionary Education, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis.

These two books complete the series of four volumes on the subject of missions, planned by the Committee on Missionary Education and written by the Rev. G. Mahler, the Walther League co-operating in the

undertaking. The series has been popular since the publication of the first volume, and deservedly so, as these volumes are little masterpieces. Our pastors and teachers will do well to encourage their distribution among our people, young and old. The price has been kept low for this purpose. As the prospects of the postwar world point to increased missionary opportunities for the Church, these books offer excellent material to condition our people to the great task that confronts us. A mission-minded Church is a forward-looking Church, holding fast to the truth once voiced by Adoniram Judson: "The future is as bright as the promises of God."

W. G. POLACK

**The Touch of the Master's Hand.** By Myra Brooks Welch. 110 pages. \$1.00. The Elgin Press, Elgin, Ill.

This collection of poems, 91 in all, by an invalid poet, has its title from the first poem in the book, one that has been widely quoted since it was first published in 1921, in the *Gospel Messenger*. The poems cover a wide field of topics, are Christian in character, and are very quotable.

W. G. POLACK

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

*From Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Mich.:*

**Living Above.** By Howard W. Ferrin. 125 pages. Price, \$1.25.

**Anchored Till Morning.** By Millard A. Jenkins. 129 pages. Price, \$1.25.

**Man of Like Passions.** Biography of Charles Grandison Finney. By Richard Ellsworth Day. 200 pages, 5×7½. Price, \$1.50.

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