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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.

**The Day of Wrath. A Study of Prophecy's Light on Today.** By Harry E. Jessop, D.D. Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, London, and Edinburgh. 119 pages, 5×7½. Price, \$1.25.

It is the same old story — in days of excitement and distress, people, also Christian people, pass by the clear and definite statements of the Holy Scriptures as contained in Isaiah, in the Psalms, in the Gospels, in the Epistles of St. Paul, and in other books of the Old and the New Testament, and turn to the difficult descriptions in the so-called apocalyptic books, as Daniel and Revelation. They forget the important hermeneutical principle that the less clear statements given in symbolic language, stressing numbers, speaking about beasts, trumpets, and great woes, should be understood and interpreted in the light of the clear books and passages. This also holds true of the present volume. If only the well-known passage of Luther in his exposition of the 37th Psalm about the clarity and obscurity of Holy Scripture would be kept in mind! The author is the Dean of the Chicago Evangelistic Institute, a Fundamentalist, but, as so many Fundamentalists and teachers at Bible schools and Bible institutes, a literalist. "The day of wrath" is indeed an important Biblical concept which we find stated in many of the Prophets, in Obadiah, Joel, Amos, Isaiah, Zephaniah, and others, and taken up by the Master and His Evangelists and Apostles in the New Testament; but this important term is a complex concept, speaking of important events in the history of the world and of the Church as precursors, forerunners, harbingers of the final consummation and the day of wrath at the end of all things. The destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. and 70 A.D., the first and second World War, and other terrible events in history are "Days of Wrath" and are related to the "Day of Wrath and Revelation of the righteous judgment of God," Rom. 2:4, as concentric circles to the center.

The present volume contains two parts, first, "Why This Slaughter?" second, "Antichrist Is Coming." But if we would go into details, we would have to write a brochure. Compare for the sound Biblical position Dr. Th. Graebner's *War in the Light of Prophecy*. L. FUERBRINGER

**The Principles of Christian Ethics.** By Albert C. Knudson, Dean Emeritus Boston University School of Theology. Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, New York, Nashville. 314 pages, 6×9. \$2.75.

This treatise gives valuable information on the history of Christian ethics and on the divergent teachings regarding various phases of the Christian moral life. And its masterly treatment of the *rationale* of the principles of Christian ethics together with their application to concrete situations (individual ethics and social ethics, the family, marriage, divorce, the State, war, Church and State, economics, etc.) deserves careful study. In so far the book is useful. But what it offers on the

great question of how the Christian life is produced and promoted is altogether harmful. What it teaches in the section dealing with the presuppositions of the Christian ethic is destructive of the Christian moral life. No true Christian life can be built upon the basis which is here proposed. While many of the conclusions reached by Dr. Knudson in his discussion of the Christian duties are in agreement with the teaching of Scripture, he takes away the dynamics needed for the Christian performance of these duties. In the first place, in listing the presuppositions of Christian ethic he warns against the harmful influence of the monergistic teaching and calls for the application of the semi-Pelagian-Arminian-Synergistic doctrine. He sets down the correct principle: "Man is a sinner and hence, if he is to be saved, if he is to attain to moral purity and to holiness of life, must receive divine forgiveness and experience the transforming power of the divine grace." (P. 64.) But this does not mean *sola gratia*. We read on page 93: "Against the Pelagian theory of sin there has been an unfavorable reaction on the part of the Church as a whole. The theory does, however, emphasize an important truth, that of man's freedom and responsibility. And in the semi-Pelagian or Arminian theory of sin the effort was made to conserve this truth without sacrificing or curtailing the more fundamental religious truth of the divine grace. According to this theory, man's nature was corrupted by the Fall, and as a result his will was weakened, and he was left with a native bias toward evil. . . . According to the theory of monergism, man is not morally *well*, as the Pelagians affirmed, nor is he morally *sick*, as the semi-Pelagians taught; he is morally *dead*. He has no independent spiritual vitality. He can of himself do no 'good' thing. He is absolutely dependent upon divine grace for his salvation. He cannot in his own strength co-operate with God in the work of redemption. God does everything. Monergism, not synergism, is the true Christian theory. The strict Augustinian doctrine was revived by Protestant reformers and made basal in their theology. . . ." Our Author takes the semi-Pelagian-Arminian-synergistic side. He declares: "The various ideas of a primitive Fall, of hereditary or racial guilt, and of the total depravity may be dismissed as unwarranted speculation." (P. 101.) "This pessimistic tendency to exaggerate the sinfulness and helplessness of man" (p. 104), this "subethical doctrine of original sin." (P. 264.) "Lutherans, Calvinists, and other Augustinians, who have held to an extreme doctrine of original sin and denied to 'fallen' man real freedom" are advised to renounce their monergism "and accept the synergistic conception of freedom." (Pp. 150, 20.) Monergism is irrational, and, worse, it is fatal to true morality. Our book's author is most explicit on this point. He knows exactly what we teach. Monergism "makes man completely dependent upon the divine grace for his redemption. . . . We ourselves, according to this theory, have no real freedom. We are slaves of sin. We can do no good thing. Our every act and thought in so far as it emanates from ourselves is sinful. We cannot avoid such action, and yet we are responsible for it. From this bondage of sin we can escape only through the aid of the Divine Spirit. Real freedom is the ability to do the right, and this is God's

gift to us. We have nothing to do with it ourselves. We are able to do wrong but not to do the right. . . . By grace we may be made free." What about this teaching? "An endless amount of equivocation and theological legerdemain has been resorted to in the effort to justify this position, but none of the attempts has ever succeeded or ever will succeed in rescuing this theory from its inherent irrationality. . . . It is fatal to true morality." (P. 81.) The only teaching which satisfies the demands of reason and produces true morality is the Arminian-synergistic teaching, which holds that "conversion is a work in which the human and the divine co-operate." (P. 105.) We, on our part, declare that the conversion and the morality which is produced in whole or in part by the natural powers of fallen man is a sham. In as far as the theologian and pastor and teacher operates with semi-Pelagianism in any of its various modifications, he makes conversion and the Christian life impossible.— Note, by the way, that the controversy on monergism vs. synergism is not a dead issue, neither in theology nor in practical life. And we thank our author for drawing the issue so clearly. Note, too, that the old sophistry is still being employed. "At bottom the difference [between semi-Pelagianism and monergism] seems to me one of words more than of substance. For both sides lay primary stress on the divine grace." (Pp. 186, 94.) Why, even the Pelagians of old, who ascribed everything to man, used to speak of "the grace" of God. Similarly, in the statements that "if a sinner is to be saved, he must receive divine forgiveness" (p. 64) and that "only through the divine grace can sin be forgiven" (p. 102) the term "gracious forgiveness" is not used in the Biblical sense. Compare statements like these: "Repentance is a change of mind, a godly sorrow for sin, an inner moral transformation. As such it is a sufficient ground for the divine forgiveness." (P. 49.) "The only moral basis for forgiveness is repentance." (P. 247.)

In the second place, our book speaks of "the unique significance of the New Testament as the chief source and norm of the Christian ethic." (P. 37.) "We base the view that love is the fundamental principle of the moral ideal on the teaching of the New Testament." (P. 118.) We, too, teach that the New Testament (and all of Scripture) is the chief (the only) norm and, more than that, the only source of the Christian life. The only norm of good works is God's Law, as presented in Scripture, and the power to lead a holy life is supplied only by the Gospel, preached by the Apostles and Prophets. But Dr. Knudson does not consider Scripture to be the inspired, the inviolable, the faithful Word of God. To him Scripture is a human product. For instance: "In the New Testament this doctrine appeared in the teaching of Paul with two or three important modifications. Jesus did not apparently commit himself either to the Fall theory or to the rabbinic conception of the *yezer hara* (the 'evil imagination' of Gen. 8:21). Indeed, he seems not to have raised the question as to the ultimate origin of human sin. Sin was to him an obvious fact; it was somehow rooted in the human 'heart'; but just how he did not say. Theorizing on the subject he left to others. And this we find in its most influential form in the Epistles of Paul, who had probably been predisposed to such speculation by his

rabbinical training. He may have learned the *yezer* theory from Gamaliel; but, if so, he freely modified it after becoming a Christian. He gave a more definite psychological content to the moral consequences of the Fall by identifying them with the *yezer hara*, which he thus transformed into a hereditary evil impulse." (P. 91.) According to this the Holy Scriptures are nothing but the pious thoughts of good, learned men. According to that the theorizing of Paul may be criticized, improved, or rejected by other learned Christians. Our author does that. He admits that "monergism has some basis in the teaching of Paul" (p. 94), and he feels at liberty to reject it as a false theory! The writings of fallible men, however, cannot serve as the source and norm of Christian ethics. The Word of God is the dynamic producing conversion, justifying men, and producing good works.

In the third place, the deity of Jesus Christ and His vicarious atonement are not touched upon in this treatise on Christian ethics. What the readers learn about Jesus is that "he did not apparently commit himself to the Fall theory, etc.," that "he not only taught us what the moral idea is; he exemplified it in his own life; he bade us to follow him; . . . he is our perfect example" (pp. 157, 160), and "that he shared the apocalyptic hope of his day, and in not a few instances his moral judgments were no doubt colored by this fact. . . . He spoke and acted as a man of his own day, and this makes it impossible for us to accept either his teaching or his example as an infallible guide in dealing with the concrete problems of our time." (P. 158.) The presuppositions of Christian ethics set forth, for instance, in Titus 2:11-14 are ignored by Dr. Knudson. — His scholarship is not the Biblical scholarship.

Some gleanings. "Minucius Felix: 'We do not *speak* great things; we *live* them.'" (P. 42.) "We should say with Augustine that 'when we speak of the perfect virtue of the saints, part of this perfection consists in the recognition of our imperfection both in truth and in humility.'" (P. 149.) "Said Calvin: 'I have always been exceedingly pleased with the observation of Chrysostom that humility is the foundation of our philosophy.'" (P. 167.) "Heretofore the German *Beruf* and the Latin *vocatio* had been appropriated by the monastic orders as their peculiar possession. Only monasticism had a *Beruf*. This Luther reversed. It was just monasticism, he affirmed, that had no *Beruf*. The true calling of God was to be realized in the workaday world. This revolutionary doctrine was based on the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers and on the doctrine of the sanctity of the common life." (P. 183.) "It is in the family that we learn the first and best lessons in obedience, reverence, truthfulness, fidelity, patience, self-control, unselfish devotion, purity, love, and all those virtues that go to make up Christian character. The family is the great training school of the moral life." (P. 199.)

Prof. Kantonen closes his review of our book with the statement: "The acceptance of Luther's doctrine of 'the orders of creation' is interesting. On the whole, however, while here and there the hands may be the hands of Luther, the voice is the voice of an Erasmus." (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 19, 1944.)

TH. ENGELDER

**How Did the World Begin?** By George McCready Price. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York. 94 pages, 5¼×7¼. Price, \$1.00.

For more than forty years George McCready Price, an Adventist by denominational affiliation, has written articles and books in defense of the Biblical doctrine of Creation against the Deistic (if not atheistic) theory of evolution; and while his writings are addressed to the common people in simple, popular language, his defense of the Biblical record of Creation nevertheless shows that he has carefully studied the theories and works of learned evolutionists. The reader may not subscribe to everything the author says. Not all the phenomena by which he seeks to support the Scripture record regarding Creation and the Flood may be explained as he does. Nor is it true that "God ordained the Sabbath as an everlasting divine memorial of this completed work" (p. 12). On the whole, however, the arguments which Price arrays on behalf of the Biblical Creation report against evolution are so overwhelmingly convincing and there is so much valuable scientific material stored up in this unpretentious Apologetic that we recommend it to our pastors, teachers, and laymen for private study, class discussion in society groups, and, above all, for collateral reading by mature students of our grade schools and high schools. Reason, in the light of the existing natural facts, cannot judge otherwise than that the Book of Genesis is true when speaking of Creation and the Flood. That is the conclusion at which the unbiased reader will arrive when he studies Price's well-written replies to the vital question "How Did the World Begin?"

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

**God's Answer.** By Dr. O. A. Geiseman. Published by Ernst Kaufmann, Inc., Chicago. 251 pages. 5¼×8. \$2.00.

With a few exceptions, the sermons in this volume are based on the old Gospel pericopes. The reader of these sermons will find that the old Gospel lessons can be used again and again and yet be presented in a manner that arouse new interest in the old truths. That is one thing that commends these sermons. They have other good features: Dr. Geiseman presents his elaboration of the text in a simple manner and in an orderly fashion; keeps in mind the needs of his congregation; is not afraid to flay sin; gives the comfort of the Gospel to sin-sick souls. We encourage the author to put into print also the sermons for the second half of the church year.

As I am writing, the thought comes to my mind that years ago we would find in the homes of our church members, besides the Bible, the Catechism, the hymnal, and a prayer book, also a *Predigtbuch*. Since our congregations have for many years been supplying the hymnal at the church services, we are not so sure that the hymnal is still found in every home. And we very much doubt that in many of our homes a sermon book can be found. It would be well that pastors urge their people to purchase such a book, so that when members of the family, because of illness or old age or other infirmities, are kept from attending the Sunday services, they may read a sermon at home. We say this

in spite of the fact that today our preachers are to a large extent supplying this need by means of the radio. The reading and contemplation of a sermon at one's own leisure under the circumstances mentioned has its own advantage.

J. H. C. FRITZ

**Proceedings of the Sixty-Fifth Convention of the Central District.**  
Published by Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. 102 pages,  
5½×8½. 37 cents.

These *Proceedings* offer a doctrinal essay prepared by the Rev. H. J. A. Bouman on Holy Baptism, covering pages 16 to 57, a subject of extreme importance to every Christian. The Report of the District Mission Board, pages 58 to 71, is given in the form of an imaginary interview of the Director of Missions, the Rev. W. C. Birkner, by a layman on a railroad trip. The District Board of Directors was empowered to purchase a suitable building in the city of Fort Wayne, the purchase price not to exceed \$25,000, to serve as a central office building, where the various standing committees of the District may conveniently meet and be in close touch with the Director of Missions, the Superintendent of Schools, and the Treasurer of the District.

THEO. LAETSCH

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

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

**Seed Thoughts.** By W. G. Heslop. 121 pages, 5½×7¾. \$1.00.

**Scripture Quiz Book.** By Mabel H. Hansen. 48 pages, 5¼×7½. 35 cents.

**The Chemistry of the Blood and Other Stirring Messages.** By M. R. De Haan. 183 pages, 5½×7¾. \$1.50.

*From the Water of Life Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wis.:*

**Memories of the Master and the Way.** By Ervin M. Burke. 130 pages, 5½×8. 75 cents.

*From Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, N. Y.:*

**God and These Times.** By Howard J. Chidley, D. D. 128 pages, 5×7½. \$1.50.

*From Loizeaux Brothers, 19 West 21st St., New York, N. Y.:*

**Paula the Waldensian.** By Eva Lecomte. 175 pages, 5×7½. \$1.00.

#### To Our Subscribers

It has been our custom to retain the names of our subscribers on our lists for two numbers after the subscription has expired, so that the subscriptions could be continued without interruption in case a renewal came in late. We were very happy to follow this plan at extra expense, but we are now unable to continue this policy because of present conditions.

Our Government has insisted that we reduce consumption of paper and eliminate all possible waste. Because of the restriction in the use of paper it will become necessary to discontinue subscriptions to all of our periodicals with the last number paid for under the subscription agreement. We shall, however, continue our policy of reminding our subscribers of the expiration of the subscription by inserting the usual number of notices in the second last and the last numbers of the periodicals they receive. It is our sincere hope that our subscribers will co-operate with us and the Government by renewing their subscriptions promptly upon receipt of the first notice.

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CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE