

THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY.

VOL. IV.

APRIL, 1924.

No. 4.

Notes on 1 Cor. 15, 20—28.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER, St. Louis, Mo.

The past years have witnessed a remarkable revival of interest in eschatological problems, especially in the apocalyptic hope of Christendom, the *parousia* of the Lord. The late war with its terror and distress may largely account for this. The agony suffered by those whose beloved ones perished on the battlefields of Europe or in the hospitals, the cruelty and magnitude of modern warfare, the universal commotion and unrest among the nations, the anxious desire for peace on earth — all these factors cooperated in directing the vision of man to Christ's second coming. Both millenarians and antimillenarians have evinced the same interest in matters eschatological, and preachers who have centered their message in Christ's speedy return have gathered about this single issue thousands of followers, whose daily discussion has been the end of the world, and whose avidity for further information scores of periodicals have fed with undiminished zeal.

Now, we admit that no one ought to find fault with a sane and Scriptural discussion of this subject. The Bible itself treats it in various places and with becoming earnestness. Nevertheless, the discussion becomes downright wrong and harmful when it departs from the explicit information which the Word of God offers on this score. In the aggregate, that information does not comprise a great deal. With regard to the millennium we have no conclusive evidence whatever; all that is taught concerning it by the millenarians is merely conjecture. But even the Scriptural information as regards the final judgment of the world is limited. Though Christ and the holy writers frequently speak of the end of the world and the second coming of Christ, they are more interested in urging their hearers to escape the doom of Judgment than in recounting the details of that awful manifestation of wrath

BOOK REVIEW.

Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.: —

Special Problems of the Christian Day-School. Concordia Teachers' Library, Vol. VIII. *Paul T. Buszin, C. H. Seltz, Theo. Kuehnert, A. A. Grossmann, Paul E. Kretzmann.* 136 pages, 5½×8½. \$1.00.

The essays contributed to Vol. VIII of the Concordia Teachers' Library by four superintendents of schools and Dr. Kretzmann touch upon a great variety of educational topics of interest to the modern teacher and so effectively treat questions of method and school management that the book has been introduced as class text in the reviewer's class in Methods of Teaching at Concordia Seminary.

GRAEBNER.

Synodalhandbuch der Ev.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten. 184 pages, $4\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$. 90 cts.

For more than two years the *Synodalhandbuch* has been out of print. The delay in getting out a new edition was due to the fact that our Synod revised its constitution and by-laws, not making essential changes, but making them conform to conditions which arose as a result of the expansion of our work. Also in various regulations for boards, changes were made, and some new regulations were added. This *Synodalhandbuch* also contains the constitution of the Synodical Conference. The book has 184 pages, including an index. A committee, on which Dr. L. Fuerbringer did the main work, was instructed and authorized by our Synod to get out this official handbook. To all officers and all pastors of our Synod this book is indispensable. Also laymen, especially officers in our churches, would do well to purchase a copy and familiarize themselves with its contents. An English translation is being gotten out. FRITZ.

Verhandlungen der achtundzwanzigsten Versammlung der Ev.-Luth. Synodalkonferenz von Nordamerika. 56 pages. 40 cts.

Although the meeting of the Synodical Conference was held in the month of August, 1922, the printed report has not been issued until now. Some provision ought to be made to have reports issued immediately after the adjournment of any synodical meeting. The subject, *Der Kampf um unser Schulwesen*, treated in the paper read before the Conference by Prof. J. P. Meyer, has, however, in the mean time not become less interesting to us. FRITZ.

Home Department Questions on Primary Leaflets. 5 cts. per set.

In issuing these question sheets on the Primary Leaflets of our Sunday-school series, a new idea in Christian education is being tried out. The question sheets are intended for children who have not the opportunity to attend a Christian day-school or a Christian Sunday-school. The sheets contain questions which the child is to answer in the space provided, and then it is to return the paper to the pastor who had mailed them. The question sheets are at present sold only in complete sets of eight lessons to the set, all enclosed in an envelope. They cannot be mailed periodically. FRITZ.

Ein rechter Freundesbrief. Ein wirklich an einen vormaligen Lehrer und jetziges Glied der *Elks* geschriebener Brief. Single copies, 5 cts.; dozen, 48 cts.; 100, \$3.33, plus postage.

Pastors who can use a German tract to enlighten the people not only with reference to the Elks, but also as to the antichristian character of other lodges will, we take it, be glad to make use of this letter, which has been issued by our Publishing House as Tract No. 162. FRITZ.

My Savior Lives! A complete program for children's Easter services. *H. R. Charlé.* 7 pages. Single copies, 5 cts.; dozen, 50 cts.; 100, \$3.50, plus postage.

While in the Church there dare be no change as to essentials, these having been fixed by the Lord Himself, yet as to their presentation and as

to methods of work there can and ought to be variety. The new Easter program by Charlé differs from the usual program inasmuch as it presents the Easter-message in verse.

FRTZ.

Concordia Report Card. Revised edition. Price, 75 cts. per hundred.

This card is a revised edition of the Concordia School Report Card.

FRTZ.

The Macmillan Company, New York, N. Y.:—

Christianity and Liberalism. *J. Gresham Machen, D. D.*, assistant professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis in Princeton Theological Seminary. 189 pages. \$1.00.

This book was reviewed in this publication last year (see Vol. III, p. 189). At that time the reviewer said: "Now and then at least the heart of the reviewer is gladdened by the sight of a good book which is really worth while studying. Dr. Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism* is a book of this kind." Dr. Machen's book was first published in February, 1923. We are glad that the first edition was soon sold out, and that the publishers were encouraged to reprint it in February of this year. We are therefore pleased to call attention to it again. As the title states, Dr. Machen contrasts Christianity with modern liberalism. He says: "In the sphere of religion, in particular, the present time is a time of conflict; the great redemptive religion, which has always been known as Christianity, is battling against a totally diverse type of religious belief, which is only the more destructive of the Christian faith because it makes use of traditional Christian terminology. This modern non-redemptive religion is called 'modernism' or 'liberalism.' Both names are unsatisfactory; the latter, in particular, is question-begging. The movement designated as 'liberalism' is regarded as 'liberal' only by its friends; to its opponents it seems to involve a narrow ignoring of many relevant facts. And, indeed, the movement is so various in its manifestations that one may almost despair of finding any common name which will apply to all its forms. But manifold as are the forms in which the movement appears, the root of the movement is one; the many varieties of modern liberal religion are rooted in naturalism, that is, in the denial of any entrance of the creative power of God (as distinguished from the ordinary course of nature) in connection with the origin of Christianity." Dr. Machen exposes the evil root out of which modern liberalism has grown. Speaking of the "immanence of God," which is one of the chief dogmas of modern liberalism, he says: "Modern liberalism, even when it is not consistently pantheistic, is at any rate pantheizing. It tends everywhere to break down the separateness between God and the world and the sharp personal distinction between God and man.... Modern liberalism has lost all sense of the gulf that separates the creature from the Creator; its doctrine of man follows naturally from its doctrine of God. But it is not only the creature limitations of mankind which are denied. Even more important is another difference. According to the Bible, man is a sinner, under the just condemnation of God; according to modern liberalism there is really no such thing as sin. At the very root of the modern liberal movement is the loss of the consciousness of sin.... But the loss of the consciousness of sin is far deeper than the war; it has its roots in a mighty spiritual process,

which has been active during the past seventy-five years. Like other great movements, that process has come silently, so silently that its results have been achieved before the plain man was even aware of what was taking place. Nevertheless, despite all superficial continuity, a remarkable change has come about within the last seventy-five years. The change is nothing less than the substitution of paganism for Christianity as the dominant view of life. Seventy-five years ago Western civilization, despite inconsistencies, was still predominantly Christian; to-day it is predominantly pagan." Being pantheistic, modern liberalism denies a personal God; denying a personal God by identifying God with the world and therefore also with man, modern liberalism denies the fact of sin in man, the need of atonement, the fact of the supernatural (miracles), and the fact of a revelation (the inspired Scriptures) coming from without. A heaven for the believer in Jesus, the Savior, has no place in the religion of modern liberalism, for its religion is merely a *Diesseitigkeitsreligion*.

In his introductory chapter Dr. Machen shows that the modern liberalistic tendency is, if it be permitted to go on unchecked, depriving us of true liberty in the Church and in the State. He says: "The whole development of modern society has tended mightily toward the limitation of the realm of freedom for the individual man." In this connection the author also says some very refreshing things in connection with education and the school laws of Nebraska and Oregon. The author writes: "Such laws, which, if the present temper of the people prevails, will probably soon be extended far beyond the bounds of one State, mean, of course, the ultimate destruction of all real education. When one considers what the public schools of America in many places already are, — their materialism, their discouragement of any sustained intellectual effort, their encouragement of the dangerous pseudoscientific fads of experimental psychology, — one can only be appalled by the thought of a commonwealth in which there is no escape from such a soul-killing system. But the principle of such laws and their ultimate tendency are far worse than the immediate results. A public school system, in itself, is indeed of enormous benefit to the race. But it is of benefit only if it is kept healthy at every moment by the absolutely free possibility of the competition of private schools. A public school system, if it means the providing of free education for those who desire it, is a noteworthy and beneficent achievement of modern times; but when once it becomes monopolistic, it is the most perfect instrument of tyranny which has yet been devised. Freedom of thought in the Middle Ages was combated by the Inquisition, but the modern method is far more effective. Place the lives of children in their formative years, despite the convictions of their parents, under the intimate control of experts appointed by the state, force them then to attend schools where the higher aspirations of humanity are crushed out, and where the mind is filled with the materialism of the day, and it is difficult to see how even the remnants of liberty can subsist. Such a tyranny, supported as it is by a perverse technique used as the instrument in destroying human souls, is certainly far more dangerous than the crude tyrannies of the past, which, despite their weapons of fire and sword, permitted thought at least to be free."

As much as we respect the outspoken, conservative position of Dr. Machen on the fundamentals of Christianity, we cannot, of course, agree with him when, referring to the colloquy at Marburg, he says that Luther "was wrong about the Lord's Supper." In the same connection, however, Dr. Machen praises Luther for not treating the question as a "trifling affair." Dr. Machen may speak for himself: "It was a great calamity when at the 'Marburg Conference' between Luther and the representatives of the Swiss Reformation, Luther wrote on the table with regard to the Lord's Supper, 'This is My body,' and said to Zwingli and Oecolampadius, 'You have another spirit.' That difference of opinion led to the breach between the Lutheran and the Reformed branches of the Church and caused Protestantism to lose much of the ground that might otherwise have been gained. It was a great calamity indeed. But the calamity was due to the fact that Luther (as we believe) was wrong about the Lord's Supper; and it would have been a far greater calamity if, being wrong about the Supper, he had represented the whole question as a trifling affair. Luther was wrong about the Supper, but not nearly so wrong as he would have been if, being wrong, he had said to his opponents: 'Brethren, this matter is a trifle, and it makes really very little difference what a man thinks about the table of the Lord.' Such indifferentism would have been far more deadly than all the divisions between the branches of the Church. A Luther who would have compromised with regard to the Lord's Supper never would have said at the Diet of Worms, 'Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise; God help me! Amen.' Indifferentism about doctrine makes no heroes of the faith."

The fact, after all, is that Luther's opponents at Marburg *did not agree*, and that Luther had the plain and clear words of Scripture, "This is My body," "This is My blood," in his favor.

We hold that the very wrong principle of Scripture interpretation which Zwingli and the theologians of the Reformed churches applied, to wit, that their human reason was permitted to dictate the interpretation of the Bible, has by its more consistent application, as time ran on, and by its own momentum, helped to usher in rationalism, which has caused much havoc in the Church, and which to-day, in the form of modern liberalism, is destroying many souls.

We do not, however, hesitate to recommend Dr. Machen's book. His book makes refreshing reading in these evil times. It is a good companion volume to *Modern Religious Liberalism* by John Horsch, published a few years ago. None of our pastors who purchase and study Dr. Machen's book will regret having spent the one dollar which the book costs. FRITZ.

Corrections.

In Dr. Kieffer's Lutheran statistics, published in our March issue, the following corrections should be noted: increase of baptized membership from 1921 to 1922: strike out 77,610 and insert 30,572; increase of communicant membership: strike out 82,344 and insert 5,516; increase of confirmed membership: strike out 101,492 and insert 12,824.

DAU.