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Conversion after Death.

A Criticism of Prof. O. Hallesby.

W. H. T. DAU, St. Louis, Mo.

Prof. O. Hallesby of the *Menighetsfakultet* at Oslo, practically a theological seminary within the Norwegian State Church, enjoys the reputation of a conservative, yea, an orthodox Lutheran theologian. He recently visited his countrymen in the United States and was well received in the Norwegian Lutheran churches. His opposition, some years ago, to the liberalism which has become dominant also in the Lutheran Church of Norway attracted a good deal of attention and brought him well-merited praise, for he did champion the cause of a purer Lutheran faith than that held by leading Norwegian churchmen. It is likely, however, that his Lutheran orthodoxy must be discounted, and that in him the Church is witnessing another instance of a conservatism in doctrine that is merely a reduced liberalism—a phenomenon not infrequently observed among the Fundamentalists in our country in their controversy with the Modernists. In a criticism of the professor's teaching, *Redaktoer* Axel B. Svensson (*Nya Vaektaren*, February, 1925) offers food for reflection. He heads his article: "Is there a Conversion ¹⁾ after Death? Some Reflections Elicited by an Article of Prof. O. Hallesby." The chief interest which our readers will have in this article is not so much the fact that it is a criticism of Professor Hallesby, whom few of our readers know, as rather the point of doctrine that is discussed. Mr. Svensson says:

"The question concerning the possibility of conversion after death is quite old. Within the Christian Church teachers could be pointed out at nearly all times who answered the question affirmatively. It happens that in our days the overwhelming majority of theologians believes that an improvement and con-

1) The Swedish term is *bacttring*, which is equal to the German *Besserung*.

BOOK REVIEW.

Vacation Bible Schools for Lutheran Churches. By *Prof. P. E. Kretzmann, Ph. D., D. D.* 10 pages; 5 cts. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.)

Pastors, and others who are interested in vacation Bible schools, ought to send for a copy of Dr. Kretzmann's ten-page tract. FRITZ.

Men and Missions. Edited by *L. Fuerbringer*. Vol. II: *Dispelling the Spiritual Gloom in South American Forests and Pampas.* By *Aug. Burgdorf*. 88 pages; 30 cts. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.)

The second booklet of the series presents interesting mission material from our South American field. The man who wrote the booklet, Pastor Aug. Burgdorf, of Chicago, has not only for many years been a member of the Board for Home Missions in South America, but a number of years ago made a personal investigation of our South American field for his board and therefore is well able to give first-hand information. We recommend that our pastors urge their people, especially also the young people of our congregations, to buy and read the booklets which are published in the *Men and Missions* series. Many of our people are not much interested in our missions because they have no information in reference to them.

FRTZ.

Synodical Reports: California and Nevada District. Twenty-fourth Report. 24 pages; 15 cts.—*Alberta and British Columbia District.* Third Report. 51 pages; 27 cts. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.)

The printed minutes of the California and Nevada District contain a doctrinal essay by Prof. W. Arndt on Rom. 12, 2: "Be not conformed to this world." The report of the Alberta and British Columbia District prints the continuation of an essay by Pastor R. Shippanowski on "The Church and the Ministerial Office" and also an extended report of the School Board.

FRTZ.

Statistical Year-Book. 193 pages; \$1.00. (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.)

The *Statistical Year-Book* of our Missouri Synod for the year 1924 is now off the press. It is a tremendous piece of work to compile the many, many figures printed on the pages of this book, and therefore the book always appears rather late in the year. Besides the statistical reports of all the congregations in our large Synod the *Year-Book* gives important information on schools, missions, educational institutions, the Board of Support, charitable institutions, societies, Concordia Publishing House, church architecture, publications, finances, etc. Considering the great expense which is incurred in getting out a book of almost two hundred pages of statistical matter, the price of one dollar is very low. Not only our pastors, but also interested laymen are encouraged to purchase a copy.

FRTZ.

How to Read the Bible. By *Richard Green Moulton, LL. D., Ph. D.,* Prof. em. of Literary Theory and Interpretation in the University of Chicago. 132 pages, 4×5½. 80 cts. (Macmillan Co., New York.)

This monograph is written, as Dr. Moulton states, in the interest of the literary study of the Bible and constitutes a plea to read the Bible "like any other book." The author suggests to his readers the use of *The Modern Reader's Bible* or *The Sacred Scriptures in Modern Literary Form*, which he himself has edited with introductions and notes. The viewpoint from which the Bible facts and teachings are presented is that

of modern liberal criticism, which applies to the Holy Scriptures the principle of evolutionary development. Thus we are told: "Job is moved at times to a surety that 'even after worms have devoured this skin,' he will see his heavenly Vindicator standing upon the earth, but he does not follow up these flashes of inspiration, and the other speakers in the dialog ignore them." Again: "Ecclesiastes comes from the Judaism of Palestine, at a time when the atmosphere of Palestine is full of the novel idea of immortality." Such views are utterly at variance with the express teachings of Scripture and certainly do not help the student of the Bible in his "literary studies." The literary study of the Bible is not benefited by the hindering crutches of liberalistic theology nor by a new rearrangement of the books and chapters, nor by the omission of portions that reflect the light of divine truth most brilliantly. To the reviewer the Holy Scriptures seem best, even for literary study, as they are presented to him in the form in which we now have them. MUELLER.

Decision Day Talks. By *Charles Francis Carter, D. D.*, Pastor of Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford, Conn. 59 pages.

The Lost Treasure of Umdilla. A Tale of Adventure in the Dark Continent. By *Annie M. Barnes.* 244 pages.

The Son of Nicodemus. A Story of the Christ for Young People. By *Howard Agnew Johnston, Ph. D., D. D.* Introduction by *Francis E. Clark, D. D., LL. D.* 221 pages.

Mountain Peaks in the Life of Our Lord. By *William Bancroft Hill, D. D., Litt. D.* 189 pages. (All four books by Fleming H. Revell Co., New York.)

The first of these titles introduces three addresses ("Building a Character"; "My Choice"; "What Kind?") that were delivered on three successive Sundays to the members of the church-school (Sunday-school?), to induce them to choose the Christian life on Decision Day, which followed on a Sunday close to these talks. There is nothing distinctly Christian in these appeals to be "true" and "strong," etc., and about man's power of choice and his character-building efforts. Jesus is exhibited as "the type" of what is good. "There has been much argument over many questions raised about Jesus in trying to explain Him. There is no argument or dispute over the excellence of His character." (p. 25.)

The second title represents a good effort at telling many interesting facts about Christian mission-work in the Congo on the background of a story in which a superintendent of missions with his son and daughter figure prominently, and actual scenes from an African mission are exhibited. The spirit that pervades the mission-work here described is of the evangelistic Methodistic kind.

The third title is a Life of Christ for young people in the form of a story. It aims to make the events calmly related in the gospels and in the Acts more vivid.

The last title exhibits prominent events in the life of the Lord that transpired on some mountain—the author names eleven of them: the Mounts of the Preparation, Temptation, the Temple, the Twelve, the

Sermon, the Miracle, the Transfiguration, the Triumphal Entry, the Agony, the Cross, the Ascension. The author defends the deity of Christ and the Trinity as a plain teaching of Scripture. DAU.

The Lord We Love. By *Charles R. Erdman*, Professor of Practical Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary. 138 pages, 5×7½. \$1.50. (George H. Doran, New York.)

In this book Dr. Erdman offers a series of devotional studies on the main events in the Savior's life, beginning with the Hymns of the Nativity and ending with Christ's Ascension. The comforting fact of the glorified Savior's triumphant descent into hell has been omitted, for reasons quite obvious, since to a Calvinistic theologian this descent means no more than the *inenarrabiles animi angustiae, cruciatus et terrores* (*Cat. Heidelb.*, Qu. 44). Likewise, in a series of this kind there should have been at least a paragraph on the *sessio ad dextram Dei*. Reformed theology is all the poorer, even in its power to comfort, because of its failure to accept and state in full the Scriptural truths with regard to Christ's person. On the whole, the author does not enter deeply into the great subjects with which he deals, but is satisfied with a few simple lessons derived from them. This is the twelfth volume from the pen of Dr. Erdman, and in view of the superficial character of this last effort a warning against the sin of polygraphy might not be out of place. MUELLER.

One Thousand Best Bible Verses, with Practical Helps for Memorizing Them. By *J. B. Smith, D. D.* 126 pages, 4½×6½. (Bible Institute Colportage Association, Chicago.)

The purpose of this brochure is to induce Christians to practise the art of memorizing Bible-passages by suggesting to them a method which renders the task easier. In making these selections of Scripture-passages, the author has kept the following considerations in mind: 1. Ease of memory as based on simplicity and brevity. 2. Verses that "grip" were given most favorable consideration; for such as evoke keenest interest are most readily remembered. 3. An effort was made to include verses on all the great fundamental doctrines of the Bible. 4. Verses with messages vital to Christian experience and life were given a large place. 5. One verse or more was selected from every book of the Bible. The verses are separated according to sentence-thoughts, while the name of the book is printed on top, and the reference on the side. The following scheme illustrates the author's method: —

ROMANS.

166 (verse to be memorized from the New Testament).

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ;
for it is the power of God unto salvation
to every one that believeth 1, 16.

167

By the deeds of the Law
there shall no flesh be justified
in His sight. 3, 20.

We welcome any new method that aids the Christian in learning by heart the sacred passages of God's Word. MUELLER.

The Cause and Cure of Infidelity. By *Rev. David Nelson, M. D.*
399 pages, $5\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$. \$1.75. (Geo. H. Doran Co., New York.)

In spite of the great number of new books that are daily placed upon the market many good books published decades ago are still holding the interest of the reading public and commanding a ready sale. Nelson's *Cause and Cure of Infidelity* is one of the "famous old" books which even to-day deserve careful perusal. Neither the cause nor the cure of infidelity has changed, and therefore the arguments and pleas of the author, written years ago, still hold good. While we do not endorse every statement made in the book, and while in particular the chapters that present the "evidence of experience" contain much with which we cannot agree, there is so much in this book that is helpful in refuting infidelity and strengthening faith in Christianity that we cheerfully recommend it to our readers. The argumentation throughout is clear and convincing, and the style is lucid. Of special value are the chapters on "The Author's Unbelief and the Means of Rescue," since here the writer speaks out of the depths of his heart on matters that concern his salvation. Of the former editions more than 100,000 copies were circulated, and scores of infidels, it is claimed, were restored to faith through the reading of this book.

MUELLER.

Buddhism and Buddhists in China. By *Lewis Hodous, D. D.*, Professor of Missions in China at the Kennedy School of Missions, Hartford, Conn. 80 pages, 5×7 . \$1.25. (Macmillan Co., New York.)

Dr. Hodous, the author of this interesting and instructive monograph, spent sixteen years of missionary service in Foochow (China), which is an important center of Buddhism, thus having an opportunity of studying the subject at first hand. Some of the chapters are: The Entrance of Buddhism into China; The Establishment of Buddhism as the Predominating Religion of China; Buddhism and the Family; Buddhism and Social Life; Buddhism and the Future Life; The Spiritual Values Emphasized by Buddhism in China; The Christian Approach to Buddhists. The paragraphs on "Emphasis on the Esthetic in Christianity," "Emphasis on the Mystical in Christianity," etc., in which the author suggests a nearer approach of Christianity to Buddhism by stressing the beautiful and mystical in the Christian religion, contain suggestions that are both wrong and dangerous. The book is of value, not only because it is most interestingly written, but because it offers information gained at first hand on a subject upon which there is still much confusion. The author speaks with authority. The volume is the third to be published in a series on "The World's Living Religions," projected in 1920 by the Board of Missionary Preparation of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

MUELLER.

Brief Mention.

In a beautiful souvenir publication Holy Cross Lutheran Congregation of St. Louis has commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of its parochial school. — Pastor Geo. C. Koenig's congregation at New York City has issued an artistic brochure describing The New Saint Paul's Church, Crotona Ave. and East 178th St., and a similar order of service for their cornerstone-laying on May 17.

DAU.