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Renew the Study of Our Lutheran Confessions.*

In the Church the Word of God and its study takes precedence of everything else. Our Lutheran Church, as the Church of the Word of God (in its origin), has emphasized that as its chief principle. No testimony ranks with the Word. In this article that foundation lies as fundamental and changeless,—I deem it supreme.

But—the confession to that Word ranks next both in the teaching of our Church and in her articles of organization. In her creed the Church witnesses of her faith in the Word. So our pastors are pledged on the Word and the Confessions. Members are received as confessors of Scripture and the Confessions. In all disputes we test the teaching by the Word, as the norm, and our creeds as our Church's standard of witness.

Of all teaching, therefore, not directly Scripture-text the Confessions (or creeds) have first rank. No individual teacher's ideas, however prominent, dare cloud the shining testimony of the Confessions. We Lutherans are creedal confessors of the Word. In the creeds it is the Church as a totality that has spoken and speaks. "We believe, teach, and confess," is a phrase oft recurring in the last of the Lutheran Confessions, the Formula of Concord.

As a pastor or a professor of theology or a church writer, what I have to say must stand the test of Scripture and the witnesses to Scripture, the Confessions. Such is the position and the manifest publication of our Church in all her documents of an official nature, in her constitutions, in her formulas of installation into sacred offices, and in her liturgies.

It is a sinister fact that this sense has weakened. In the great breaking up of the Reformation Church now going on in the world we see her Confessions brutally violated, torn to shreds, neglected

* This article was written by Dr. Adolf Hult and appeared in the *Lutheran Companion* of March 24, 1924. It is reprinted here as sounding a trumpet blast which is much needed.—Ed.

BOOK REVIEW.

Lutheran Fundamentals. By *G. H. Gerberding*. 1925. 321 pages, 5×7¼. \$1.50. (Augustana Book Concern, Rock Island, Ill.)

Dr. Gerberding, now professor in Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary at Minneapolis, has written this volume of doctrinal discussions "with applications for the common man." It states, in the main adequately, the position of the Lutheran Church on the principal doctrines of Christianity. The author's peculiar views on Predestination pervade the fifth chapter, entitled "God's Work of Providence." Who can make anything of this (p. 99): "Foreknowledge does not bind or coerce. Foreordination does"? Of a real election in the sense of Eph. 1 and Rom. 8 nothing remains when the ten points which follow are accepted as "the New Testament teaching on Election." Also the statement (p. 189) that the Holy Ghost, through Baptism, "implants into the young soul these elements of the new life in embryo or germ form" is familiar to us from former books of the author. Who, we would ask, has ever "iterated and reiterated that man can do nothing at all toward his own salvation" and has left such statements "unexplained, unqualified"? (p. 209.) The trouble with Dr. Gerberding is that, as he explains and qualifies the statement, it becomes synergistic. That there should be no mention of Rome in connection with the discussion of Antichrist (p. 284 ff.) seems strange in a Lutheran text-book. On the millennium the author hedges, but he quotes for that doctrine texts which in their connection refer either to the New Testament Church or to heaven. Even in an elementary text one should expect something on the doctrine of the ministry, only incidentally referred to in *Lutheran Fundamentals*. Dr. Gerberding's gift of lucid presentation is in evidence throughout the book, and its various chapters betoken a wonderful preservation of the aged author's mental powers. The chapter on Sin is very fine.

GRAEBNER.

Fundamental Christianity. By *Francis L. Patton*, ex-president of Princeton University and Princeton Theological Seminary. 330 pages, 7½×5. \$2.25. (The Macmillan Co., New York.)

The contents of this book consist of five apologetic lectures delivered in 1924 at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va. These lectures here appear in a revised and enlarged form and represent President Patton's conservative views on inspiration, the deity of Christ, and salvation through faith in Him. Unfortunately, the author frequently makes unwarranted concessions, as, for example, over against Romanism. (p. 131.) He also avoids important issues on which there ought to be clear and unmistakable testimony, *e. g.*, in the treatment of the Person of Christ. (p. 204 ff.) Lastly, also the errors of Calvinism, of which the writer is an advocate, are apparent, although the trend of the book is irenic and unionistic. Of the five chapters, "The Theistic View of the World," "The Seat of Authority in Religion," "The New Christianity," "The Person of Christ," "The Pauline Theology," the first, with its keen analysis of the materialistic, pantheistic, and pluralistic tendencies of to-day, is perhaps the one from which the reader may profit most. The chapter on "The New Christianity" is a good refutation of Modernism. On the whole, the book is worthy of a close study.

MUELLER.

Refuge and Strength. By *Otto Mees*. 206 pages, $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. \$1.00. (Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus, O.) Order from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

This is an excellent collection of seven-minute talks, delivered before the students of Capital University (Ohio) at their chapel exercises. The purpose of the addresses is "to awaken, or to keep alive, in the minds of the students the consciousness that, while intellectual growth is fostered, spiritual development must not be neglected." The subjects treated in the addresses are: "Life," "Habits," "Character Building," "Service," "God's Gifts," "Prayer," "Church," and "Christian Characteristics." They are models in form and contents and sound that definite note of faith and piety which has its source in true Christian obedience to God's Word. The busy pastor will find in these talks many valuable lessons also for his young people's societies.

MUELLER.

The Holy Spirit in the Gospels. By *J. Ritchie Smith, D. D.* 374 pages and indices, $7\frac{1}{2} \times 5$. \$2.50. (The Macmillan Co., New York.)

Dr. J. Ritchie Smith, Professor of Homiletics in Princeton Theological Seminary, is the author of a number of works which in a most scholarly manner defend conservative Christian belief against modern rationalism. The present volume comprises a series of exegetical studies, in which every passage of the four gospels relating to the Holy Spirit is examined in order that its precise significance may be discovered. It is a *rara avis* among the many superficial books that now flood the market and commends itself not only because of its fine devout spirit, but also because of its exhaustiveness. While one may not always accept the author's opinions, we are ready to say that no interested reader will lay aside this book without having gained a good deal by its study. Dr. Smith has packed into the 374 pages of his book a remarkable wealth of historical and theological information. Scholarliness seems to be largely on the side of Fundamentalism.

MUELLER.

Progressive Christianity. By *William A. Vrooman*. 368 pages and indices, $8 \times 5\frac{1}{2}$. \$2.50. (The Macmillan Co., New York.)

In the bitter controversy now raging between Naturalism and Supernaturalism both sides are contributing liberally to the already heavily stocked market of religious books. William A. Vrooman represents the extreme liberal views of modern ultrarationalism, or, as it is called, "The New Reformation," which sweeps away all traditional doctrines of orthodox Christianity. *Audiat et altera pars*. Those who desire to be acquainted with modern Liberalism will find in this book a complete program of what "progressive Christianity" stands for.

MUELLER.

The Gospel Story in Art. By *John La Farge*. 417 pages, $9\frac{1}{4} \times 7$. \$2.50. (The Macmillan Co., New York.) Order from Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.

That the sacred story of Christ's nativity, life, and Passion has been told almost completely in paintings that have achieved immortal fame is well known. However, these paintings have been very seldom grouped

together in such a way that the common reader can appreciate them; nor has the description of them always been sufficiently popular to suit the average mind. *The Gospel Story in Art* is an attempt to offer to the reader both the pictures of the great masters and a description of them that is not too technical. In fact, it is a rare pleasure to glance over the pages of this admirable book and, under the guidance of the renowned author, to study the eighty great paintings that illustrate Christ's life and death. The reader may not always agree with him, but he must acknowledge that, on the whole, his judgment is sound. The make-up of the book is excellent and the price remarkably low. We heartily recommend this fine work to all lovers of sacred art.

MUELLER.

The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity. By *Captain Francis McCullach*. 1924. 401 pages, 8¾×5½. (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.)

There is one naive statement, and only one, in the book — the opening sentence of the author's preface. Having settled oneself down to the feast of horrors indicated by the title, a person is left a trifle short of wind when, turning to the opening sentence, he is informed: "The title of this book is to some extent misleading; for instead of dealing exhaustively with the persecution of Christians in which the government of Lenin has indulged during the last five years, I merely touch here on the fringe of that vast subject." Mr. McCullach does not explain how the very misleading title originated. If the firm were not as reputable a one as E. P. Dutton, one might be tempted to suggest that a book entitled, *The Bolshevik Persecution of Christianity* sells vastly better than one entitled, *The Cieplak Trial*. Nevertheless, the author, who went to Russia as correspondent of the *New York Herald*, tells a thrilling story. He attended all the sittings of the Red Court which tried Archbishop Cieplak and his Roman Catholic clergy, and he notes down his impressions with microscopic detail and abundant quotations from Bolshevik documents. The correspondent's story has the ring of truth.

GRAEBNER.

Cosmic Evolution. By *John Elof Boodin*. 1925. 484 pages, 8×5½. \$3.50. (The Macmillan Co., New York.)

Dr. Boodin is Professor of Philosophy in Carleton College. He has written, during the past twenty years, various texts dealing with his peculiar type of the new realism. In this book he takes his stand outside the field of physical or biological investigation, but instead deals with evolution from the standpoint of such abstractions as Cosmic Levels, the Monad and Whole, and the Order of Nature. Boodin's Realism, as a matter of fact, is a "Cosmic Idealism," by which he endeavors to fight the materialistic tendencies of the day. He emphasizes the cosmic point of view as over against the earth point of view; yet the deity at which he arrives is certainly not the God of the Bible, neither of the New nor of the Old Testament, but, at best, the world-soul of ancient Greek speculation. There is an interesting chapter on the Einstein Theory and other theories of Relativity.

GRAEBNER.

