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Lenten Testimonies.*

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1. Who Is God?

There are two sources of information concerning God, nature and the Bible.

From nature we learn the *fact that there is a God*. "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." Rom. 1, 20.

When Napoleon's generals down in Egypt one night were repeating the popular atheistic ideas of French revolutionary times, the great emperor said, waving his hands towards the starry heaven: "Who made that sky?"

Nature also reveals attributes of God. When we look out upon the wild mountains and the boundless ocean, we are impressed with the power of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." The storm that sweeps over woodland and villages reveals the wrath of God. In the spring-time, when the flowers bloom and the birds sing, we say: "How gentle and good God is!"

But we do not know from nature who the true God is, neither how He is disposed toward us. For that knowledge we turn to the Bible.

The Bible does not prove that there is a God, it takes that for granted. The very first verse of the Bible says: "In the beginning, God," etc. And the last verse in the Bible says: "If any man shall

* Continuing a custom of former years, a series of Lenten talks is herewith presented that were delivered during the noon-hour of one week in Lent at the American Theater in St. Louis, Mo.

BOOK REVIEW.

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

Popular Commentary of the Bible. New Testament. Vol. I: Matthew to Acts. *Paul E. Kretzmann, M. A., Ph. D., B. D.* VII and 679 pages, 7×10½. \$4.50, postpaid.

God be praised for this work! Many a pastor in our Lutheran Church has, no doubt, been asked by his members for a commentary on the Bible in the English language. Until now we have always been at a loss unqualifiedly to recommend a commentary which could be bought by our people at a popular price. Now we have the first volume of such a commentary, and our Publishing House announces that not only Volume II of the New Testament, Romans to Revelation, but, perhaps, also Volume I of the Old Testament will be placed on the market yet this year.

The volume which has just left the press contains an exposition of the four gospel narratives according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Acts of the Apostles; three maps: "Palestine at the Time of Christ," "The Western Half of the Scripture World, Showing St. Paul's Journeys," and a relief map of Palestine; and the following special articles and *excursus*: The Virgin Birth, The Obligation of a Rightful Betrothal, The Baptism of John, The Jewish Synagog, The Significance of the Sermon on the Mount, The "Son of Man," Roman Government and Tax Collection in Palestine, Miracles, The Observance of Sunday, Christ's Sphere of Activity in His Prophetic Office, The Primacy of Peter, The Call of the Gospel, The Pharisees and Sadducees, The Baptism of Children, The Sin against the Holy Ghost, Demoniac Possession, The Mode of Baptism, The Enrolment of Quirinius, The Obligation of the Work of Atonement, The Deity of Jesus, The Logos of the Prolog, "The Flesh of the Son of Man," A Tabellary Harmony of the Gospel-story, The Early History of Paul's Life, The Trustworthiness of Luke as a Historian, Vision, Dream, and Revelation, A Summary of the Latter Part of Paul's Life, A Brief History

of English Bible Translations. A foreword was written by Prof. J. T. Mueller.

A good commentary must ring true to the hermeneutical principle, *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*. Measured by this standard, the *Popular Commentary* is a true exposition of the *sensus litteralis* of the Author of the Scriptures, the Holy Ghost.

The writer of a popular commentary will make use of all the critical apparatus of the learned exegete, including a thorough study of the original Hebrew and Greek texts on the basis of the best manuscripts, a critical examination of orthodox and heterodox exegetical literature, and a careful review of the latest archeological findings; but in his commentary he will give only the *results* of his laborious work in a concise form and in such plain language that the average layman can read and understand. Judged from this view-point, one will not be disappointed in the *Popular Commentary*. And this very fact at the same time also makes it a reliable desk-book for the busy pastor and preacher.

The division of the chapters according to subjects, which are made to stand out in the text, and the adding of a summary at the end of each chapter, makes it possible to see at a glance what is treated, and greatly enhances the value of the book, especially for the layman; for example, Matthew, chapter 18: The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, 1—14; How to Deal with an Erring Brother, 15—22; Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, 23—35.

While it has been desirable to expand on such doctrines and such disputed questions as to which even the layman will desire to obtain more detailed information, *e. g.*, The Virgin Birth of Christ, The Observance of Sunday, The Primacy of Peter, Baptism of Children, Demoniac Possession, and many others, it is a happy arrangement that such information is given under separate heads, and that it is not included in the regular text, but placed at the end of the chapter.

A few samples are herewith given to show both the manner of treatment and the style. Acts 8, 14—17: "Special Gifts of the Holy Spirit: V. 14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, v. 15. who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost v. 16. (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). V. 17. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. The apostles never undertook to exercise hierarchical powers and to assume a jurisdiction which they did not possess. But they had been commissioned by Christ as the teachers unto all nations and therefore were anxious to establish true unity of faith in all congregations, no matter where they might be established. It was an important point in the progress of Christianity that people outside of the Old Testament covenant should receive the Gospel and be added to the Church of Christ. When the apostles therefore received the news that Samaria had received the Word of God, that its people had professed allegiance to the Redeemer, they sent Peter and John as their personal representatives to

find out the truth of the report and, if so, to establish the bonds of fraternal unity. The fact of the report being certified to, Peter and John not only extended to the Samaritan Church the hand of fellowship, but also transmitted to these new converts the wonderful gifts which they themselves had received. The Samaritans had been baptized, and therefore they were in full possession of the pardon of God, as well as of the Spirit which sanctifies, Mark 16, 16; Acts 2, 38. But now they were equipped with extraordinary gifts, with the power to perform miracles, to speak with strange tongues, to prophesy, and to give other peculiar evidences of the Spirit's omnipotence and divine majesty.²⁷⁾ These extraordinary manifestations had not yet been imparted to these believers, although all the spiritual gifts were theirs by and through Baptism. But now these powers were transmitted to them by the laying on of hands, for it was a part of the Lord's plan in the early Church to use miracles and signs to confirm the preaching of the Gospel. "The design of such gifts, and the way in which they were exercised in the congregation, are fully set forth by Paul in 1 Cor. 12—14. These gifts served a temporary purpose, until the facts, doctrine, commandments, and promises of the new covenant were committed to writing by inspired men, when the prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge of individual teachers gave place to the written Word." 28)

We also give a quotation from the *cækursus* on The Sin against the Holy Ghost, the author summing up his remarks in these words: "The following points, therefore, should be kept in mind always: The person that commits the sin against the Holy Ghost must either have been converted, or must at least have had the opportunity of feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost upon his heart. It is essential that the truth be rejected, whose soundness and sacredness the sinner cannot deny. The person living in this sin will continue in his stubborn resistance, with blasphemous, outspoken mockery of the work of the Holy Ghost, until the end. The sin is not unpardonable on account of its greatness, but on account of its nature of rejecting all pardon. No one has committed the sin that still seeks repentance. And finally, we cannot be sure until after a person's death whether he has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and even then it is best to keep the judgment in abeyance.¹⁰⁾"

The mechanical make-up of the *Popular Commentary*, paper, print, arrangement of matter, and binding, is a good sample of the art of book-making. The price is reasonable. The publisher should not fail to have the author prepare a detailed index, and add it to the second volume of each Testament.

It goes without saying that every pastor should persuade members of his church to buy the new *Popular Commentary*. We believe that the younger members of our churches will be especially interested in this

27) Luther, 12, 143.

28) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 145.

10) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 59; Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, 380—389; Luther, 10, 1198—1209.

new Lutheran commentary in the English language. It will mean much for the future of our Lutheran Church if our young people do not neglect the study of the Scriptures. We believe that the first edition of the *Popular Commentary* will soon be sold out.

FRITZ.

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

Synodical reports of the Missouri Synod, Nos. 3 to 5, and 7 to 16. In the collection of District reports, regularly published by the Missouri Synod, we have a fine compend of current Missouri history. This is embodied chiefly in that section of these reports which records the business transactions of the various Districts. Valuable reports of committees are here submitted that show the status and progress of the various activities of the individual Districts. Then there is the thoughtful presidential address, read at the opening of conventions, and the president's report of official acts performed between two conventions. Last, but not least, there come the fine doctrinal papers, elaborated with great diligence and all of them characterized by loyal adherence to the inspired Word of God and the Confessions of our Lutheran Church. In these doctrinal papers there is, of course, manifested a variety of gifts, showing that the Lord uses many qualities in the sanctified members of His Church for particular work. The selection of topics for these doctrinal papers also evinces a fine perception of the needs of the Church in our own day. This feature appears still more strongly in the discussion of the subject in the paper itself. In the collection above mentioned we have the following papers: A paper on "The Qualities and the Marks of the Church," read by Pastor E. Berner before the 52d convention of the Michigan District. This paper follows closely the arrangement of doctrinal material in Questions 186 to 190 in our Synodical Catechism. The report of this District embodies a very valuable account of the parochial school situation in the State of Michigan and relates what measures the District had adopted to combat the attacks that have been made by secular and other interests upon our school.—At the 27th convention of the Minnesota District Pastor A. H. Kuntz read a paper on "Modern Soul-Destroying Deviations from the Doctrine Regarding Christ, Our Savior." This paper puts the finger of emphasis on a great defect in much that passes as Christian teaching in our day on the fundamental truths of the religion that proposes to save men from their sin by the substitutive work of the incarnate Son of God. A paper of this kind would deserve to be placed into the hands of many a modern preacher, who bears the name of Christian, and yet in all his official activities defeats the very purpose of the Christian ministry.—Pastor H. Heise submitted to the 9th convention of the Northern Illinois District a paper on the "Royal Office of Christ." This paper was not completed and will be continued at the next convention of the District.—A most timely subject was discussed at the 8th convention of the North Dakota and Montana District, where Dr. Pieper spoke on the subject: "What Do We Learn from Luther at Worms?" From the fulness of his theological knowledge and with scholarly erudition the author grouped the main lessons that we are to learn from Luther's attitude at Worms under the two heads: "Grace alone, and the Scriptures alone."—Only

brief summaries of doctrinal papers are given in the report of the 15th convention of the Oregon and Washington District. Pastor L. Stuebe spoke on "The First Christian Congregation at Jerusalem as a Model for Our Modern Congregations." He exhibited from the life of this earliest church its charities, its missions, and its tribulation and persecution. At the same convention Rev. W. J. Janssen spoke on "The Christian Home, Its Sanctity and Its Duties."—The North Wisconsin District chose not to embody the doctrinal paper submitted at its 3d convention by Dr. P. Kretzmann, but to publish this paper as a separate print. We are informed that the paper discusses the 46th Psalm, the hymn of valor and challenge of the Lutheran Church,—certainly a timely subject to discuss before a Lutheran convention in the memorable year of 1921.—The 10th convention of the Atlantic District listened to a paper on "Infant Baptism" by Dr. J. N. H. Jahn, which shows, first, that infant baptism is commanded by God; secondly, that also to infants Baptism is a means of grace. — The report of the 27th convention of the Southern District appears without a doctrinal paper. Such a paper, however, was read before the convention on the subject: "The Office of a Bishop." A melancholy interest attaches to this particular paper: it had been prepared by Pastor J. F. Reinhardt of Pensacola, Fla., but the author entered the eternal rest of God's saints before the convention met, and his paper was read by Rev. H. Reuter.—With particular interest the report of the first convention of the Colorado District will be taken up by our readers. With the consent of the General Body this District, formerly a part of the Kansas District, was given separate organization. The presidential address of Pastor Lehenbauer strikes the right note when declaring that also this new District shall be recognized by all who view it as a seed blessed by the Lord. The doctrinal paper submitted at this District by Rev. Theodore Hoyer discusses the subject of "The Saving Grace of God." The discussion of this subject will be continued at the next convention of this District.—At the 49th convention of the Eastern District Pastor J. Sohn submitted a fine practical paper on "Family Worship," which is to be continued at the next convention. Both because of the subject and because of the happy treatment that was given it and the lively discussion which it elicited, a very complete report, perhaps in the form of a separate publication, would be desirable.—The 28th convention of the Canada District listened to a historical paper by Rev. T. J. A. Huegli on "The Defection and Return of Israel in the Days of Othniel." The period covered by this paper is one recorded in Judg. 3, 5—11.—Another new District of the Missouri Synod, whose organization was ordered by the late convention of the General Body, is the Alberta and British Columbia District. The first report of this District is submitted without a doctrinal paper. We are informed that Pastor R. Shippanowski submitted an opportune and instructive paper on the subject of "Church and Ministry." It is said that this paper was suited particularly to the needs of this new District. — A highly instructive paper, showing much original research in the pertinent literature, was submitted by Pastor F. W. Loose on the subject: "The Mormons," at the 11th convention of the South Dakota District. In the territory where this paper was read and discussed it certainly met special

local needs, but even beyond the border of the Western States, where Mormonism is a standing danger, Pastor Loose's paper will be gratefully received by all who desire first-hand information in a nutshell on this subject.—At the 9th convention of the Central Illinois District Pastor E. Berthold discussed Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: "Of the Church," and Prof. R. Neitzel submitted an English paper on Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession. This District has hit upon the happy plan of discussing at its annual conventions the entire Augsburg Confession, article after article, so that when this series is completed, we shall have a valuable commentary on the basic Confession of the Lutheran Church.

Most of the papers mentioned in this review are German, but nearly every author has worked also with English sources, and in Districts like the Southern, the Oregon and Washington, and the Central Illinois District, just mentioned, there have been English papers. Much of the business transactions in these Districts is through the medium of the English language. The report of the Southern District is entirely English.

2. *Schriftenverein (E. Klaerner), Zwickau, Saxony:—*

A beautiful souvenir volume, inscribed, **Eine kleine Kraft**, has been published by Pastor M. Willkomm in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of his church at Niederplanitz in Saxony. An account is here given of the origin of the Free Church movement in Germany, the persecution which the early confessors of genuine Lutheranism had to suffer from a hostile state church, their limited resources and unlimited zeal, and last, not least, the manifest blessing of God which has rested upon their humble endeavors and has caused them to become a spiritual power for good in a decadent and decrepit Church, that has not been fully recognized by the Germans as yet, but, if present signs do not deceive, will become a still greater force for true Christianity and confessional Lutheranism in the future. The little booklet is illustrated by the insertion of a view of the congregation's property at Niederplanitz and photographs of men who have been prominent in its history, particularly Dr. Otto Willkomm, for many years a wise leader not only of his own congregation, but of the Saxon Free Church in general.—*Schrift und Bekenntnis* is the title of a theological supplement, which, since the beginning of 1920, has been published quarterly in connection with the organ of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Saxony and Other States. The four issues of this publication, completing the first volume, give evidence of the solid theological work that is being done by our brethren in Germany. The opening article by Professor Stallmann explains the choice of the title of this publication. A serial article by the same author discusses one of the controverted points in modern Lutheran theology, to wit: "The Conduct of Human Will Before, During, and After Conversion." Rev. M. Willkomm has contributed articles on our definition of theology and on the guilt of modern positive theology. Each issue gives a survey of contemporaneous church events in Germany, and the editorial judgment expressed with the review of these events is pointed and fair. We commend this thoughtful undertaking of our brethren to the attention of our readers.—A doctrinal paper read at the convention

of the Saxon Free Church during 1921 was on the subject of "Infant Baptism" and was submitted by Rev. Th. Reuter. The paper has been published as a separate print. After giving the history of the institution and practise of pedobaptism, the author discusses the following doctrinal points: 1) Children must be brought to faith in order to be saved; 2) a means of grace ordained by God is required to bring them unto faith; 3) the means of grace ordained by God to bring children unto faith and thus unto salvation is, without doubt, Holy Baptism; 4) Holy Baptism can work saving faith in infants; 5) according to the command of Christ, baptizing and teaching must go hand in hand. — An old friend comes to our desk in the form of *Der Ev.-Luth. Hausfreund* for 1922. Like its predecessors, it is full of timely reading-matter, relating particularly to Luther's translation of the New Testament during his Warburg exile. — This publication is accompanied by a *Lutherkalender* for 1922, which can be mounted in our homes. It contains one leaf for each week of the year and offers beneath the calendar part a Bible-passage and a selection from Luther's writings which are to be meditated during that week. — One of the teachers of the Lutheran congregation at Niederplanitz, Mr. Fr. Gillhoff, introduces himself to the larger reading public as a Christian poet of promise by a collection of poems which he entitles *Lichter der Heimat* (Home Lights). The publication is embellished with illustrations by R. Schaefer and O. Rothe. The underlying thought of all the poems contained in this collection is the Christian home; first the one in which a person is reared, then the one which he rears himself. How the course of the church-year, from Advent to Reformation Day, is observed in such a home, and how the Christian hope of the everlasting home beyond is cherished and nurtured in our Christian homes here on earth is shown by the poetical compositions in this volume of 176 pages. — A publication that entitles the publisher to the gratitude of a host of parents and children is *Lasset die Kindlein zu mir kommen* (Suffer the Little Children to Come unto Me). By Dr. C. M. Zorn. It reproduces in 298 devotional exercises the contents of the four gospels, and thus represents a child's biography of our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The book will be used with delight by children and parents at their daily family worship. — A number of thoughtful tracts have been issued by this publication house that relate to the spiritual needs of Christians in Germany at the present time. The titles of these are: *Seid getrost! Fuerchtet euch nicht! Unentbehrlich fuer jedermann! Halte, was du hast!* by Dr. O. Willkomm. *Wer sind und was wollen die Missouriier?* by Gustav Ruemelin. The two tracts named last in particular deserve wide dissemination. Dr. Willkomm's tract appears in its fifth edition. It is a defense of Luther's German Bible over against the unwarranted claims of the Modern Revised Version. The tract by Pfarrer Ruemelin, a member of the Wuerttembergische Landeskirche is an appreciation of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod and her methods of church-work that is prized all the more because it has come from an unexpected quarter. It is a rare experience for Missourians to receive such fair treatment as is accorded them in this little tract of twenty-four pages.