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THE GROUNDS OF LUTHERAN DISSENSION IN THIS COUNTRY.

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To the question, Why are not all the Lutherans in this country united in one grand body, with generous concessions for individual differences of opinion, and with suitable provisions for the use of various languages? the plain answer is, *They do not all occupy the same relation to the Lutheran confessional writings of the sixteenth century*; that is (a) they do not all accept all the contents of the Lutheran Book of Concord, and (b) in cases where several bodies do accept and subscribe all the contents of the Book of Concord, they do not *interpret* every several article alike. In this is found the true ground of Lutheran dissension. It is *confessional and doctrinal diversity*.

That we may make this clear to the reader, we will state as fairly as we can the attitudes which different Lutheran bodies in this country hold to the Lutheran confessional writings—viz., the Augsburg Confession (1530); the Apology of the Confession (1531); the Smalcald Articles (1537); the two Catechisms of Luther (1529); the Form of Concord (1577); all of which, together with the three œcumenical creeds, were published as the BOOK OF CONCORD in the year 1580.

I. THE GENERAL SYNOD.—This body, which contains 1002 ministers, 1450 congregations, and 157,110 members, was organized in the year 1820. Because of the prevalent rationalistic spirit in one or two of the older and larger district synods uniting in the organization, it was not found practicable to place in the constitution even the *name* of any one of the above-mentioned Lutheran confessional writings. But when, three years after the organization, the Pennsylvania Synod withdrew, not for *doctrinal*, but *wholly for practical* reasons, the General Synod soon after took the Augsburg Confession as its doctrinal basis, and declared: "The fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught in a manner

substantially correct in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession."

This *qualified* subscription to the Augsburg Confession was doubtless all that could be attained at that time, yet really it marks an epoch in the *confessional* life and history of the Lutheran Church in America. But in the year 1864 the General Synod made its confessional basis more clear and distinct by accepting "the Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word." And as further evidence of her firm adherence to the historic faith of the Lutheran Church, the professors in her theological seminary are required every five years to subscribe *ex animo* to the Augsburg Confession and to the Small Catechism, and to "promise solemnly not to teach anything, either directly or by insinuation, which shall appear to them to contradict or to be in any degree more or less remote" from these standards; and every candidate for the ministry is required to make personal subscription to the General Synod's doctrinal basis. But in giving what she believes to be an *unqualified* subscription to the Augsburg Confession, the General Synod does not cut herself off from recognition of and fellowship with other evangelical Christians; for her constitution makes it solemnly obligatory upon her to "be sedulously and incessantly regardful of the circumstances of the times, and of every casual rise and progress of unity of sentiment among Christians in general, in order that the blessed opportunities to promote concord and unity, and the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom may not pass by neglected and unavailing."

In thus *heartily and unqualifiedly* accepting the Augsburg Confession as her doctrinal basis, and in thus throwing the strongest guards round the teaching from her theological chairs and from her pulpits,

imaginary guesses: "The declarations of the Christian Scriptures authorize the ascription of personality to what is called the Father, as well as to that which is called the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; and also the ascription to each of these of essential divinity. To reconcile these statements is a problem for pure thinking, in which the Christian mind regards itself as having succeeded; but imagination here likewise interferes, and ascribes to each of these the characteristics of human personality. It figures three several consciousnesses (if this word can be rightly pluralized), each in itself independent, and neither necessary to the thought of the other; hence three wills, or possible activities, only arbitrarily in accord, or in accord from the moral necessity of love. Thus we have a virtual Tritheism, with its attendant difficulties. The doubting mind relucts from this, and divisions in Christendom have arisen in consequence. The expressed mind of the Church in its conciliar decisions has guarded against this, but the propensity still persists. No doubt the common Christian mind, ever victimized by imagination, thinks the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in this tritheistic way, which may not necessarily be harmful to its devotional or practical life, but also may and has been. No doubt this has helped along the propensity to multiply the objects of worship, and has encouraged the cultus of the Blessed Virgin and other saints. It is, then, needful that theology should so rule the public Christian instruction as to obviate this propensity and render needless the assaults of unbelief or misbelief."

Throughout this work is a model of concise and thorough discussion of its several important themes, and a most valuable addition to the current literature of the Church.

T. STAFFORD DROWNE.

GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

ROMANS DISSECTED. A New Critical Analysis of the Epistle to the Romans. By E. D. McREALSHAM. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; New York: Scribners, 1891. Post 8vo, pp. iii., 95, 75 cents.

This is the title of a little treatise which in its essential contents has been published both in English and German. It has been attributed to Professor Klostermann, of Kiel; to Dr. Zahn, of Stuttgart, and to other noted scholars; but the author's name is still a secret. [The attention of the reader is called to the fact that the letters of the name under which the German edition of the work in question appeared, Carl Hessedamm, and the English name given above are identical, and that they are found in a different combination in the name of Professor Charles M. Mead.—EDITOR.]

The work is a travesty upon Pentateuchal criticism. In it the alleged principles and methods of the higher criticism are applied to Paul's Epistle to the Romans with much cleverness. The result is the discovery of the supposed composite character of the epistle. He finds that it is made up of four documents, which he calls G 1, G 2, J C, and C J.

To reach this result, the author first lays down three of the "incontrovertible assumptions of all scientific study of the Bible." These assumptions—"the gradual growth of all important institutions," "supernaturalism is a superstition," "the incredibility of all religious tradition until con-

firmed by the general approval of critics"—make the genuineness of the Pauline Epistles inadmissible. He also feigns to assume the validity of the results claimed by the higher critics of the Pentateuch.

Having thus prepared the way, our author proceeds to prove the composite character of the epistle by means of a doctrinal argument founded upon the different types of thought discovered in these so-called documents. The following is his description of the characteristics of the four documents whose names he applies to their respective authors. "They are all Christians, but present different phases of Christian thought and doctrine. G 1 portrays Christianity as an ethical institution, a spiritualized Judaism. Salvation, according to him, is gained by *obedience to the law*. We find here nothing about *faith* of any sort as a condition of salvation. G 1 is the oldest document. In G 2, on the contrary, though nothing is said about *faith in Jesus*, salvation is emphatically represented as a Divine gift, and the appropriation of it comes through *faith in God*. In J C the prominent thought is that of justification through *faith in Christ*, and particularly in Christ as a *vicarious sacrifice*. In C J the chief stress is laid on the necessity of *spiritual union between the Christian and Christ*, through which the life of the flesh is replaced by that of the Spirit."

The names of the documents are derived from these considerations and from the use of the terms God, Jesus Christ, and Christ Jesus.

The second argument in support of this alleged discovery is based upon the diction and style of the documents; upon the use in a large measure of a different vocabulary, while the same words are employed in different significations.

The third and last argument is the historical, which is an effort to show, while seeming to approve the positions of the critics, that their methods are absurd and senseless. The author closes with an expression of his purpose in writing.

The book displays an extensive acquaintance with the literature of Pentateuchal criticism, and also of this epistle. We see that he has at his elbow the "transcribers" and the "redactor," and that he can parallel the other "assumptions" of the higher critic. He assumes to transpose a disturbing word and section; now he praises the skill of the redactor, and anon condemns his clumsiness. Like some critics of the Pentateuch, McRealsham knows well what the author of each document desired to write and ought to have written in order to have fully expressed his thought. He is able to correct their errors and those of the "redactor" and "transcribers" by excision, insertion, substitution, etc. All this is done with sufficient skill to make the book witty and interesting, if not very profitable. Whether the object to be attained is of sufficient importance and moment to justify such handling of this great epistle must be left to the conscience of the writer and to the judgment of the reader.

REYS R. LLOYD.

GENEVA, ILL.

THE DOCTRINE OF A FUTURE LIFE, from a Scriptural, Philosophical, and Scientific Point of View, including especially a Discussion of Immortality, the Intermediate State, the Resurrection, and Final Retribution. By JAMES STRONG, S.T.D., LL.D. New York: Hunt & Eaton; Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1891. 12mo, pp. 128.

Dr. Strong increases his claim upon American scholars by this condensed treatise on a theme which is just now attracting general attention. The special topics discussed are immortality, the intermediate state, the resurrection, and final retribution. These topics are treated from a philosophical and scientific as well as a scriptural point of view; the language is lucid, the argument clear, and the entire discussion interesting and instructive. The treatise will be read with profit not only by theologians and ministers, but by the people; it certainly deserves wide circulation.

After a brief explanatory introduction, the author proceeds to discuss the intricate subject of unembodied spirit, as seen in the infinite form in God and in finite form in the angels; maintaining the general doctrine that spirit may exist independently of matter. He then proceeds to consider embodied spirit as realized in man, bringing out the several lines of distinction between the natural life and the spiritual life, and showing that while the natural perishes, like other material organisms, the spiritual is invested with immortality or an eternity of being. Such eternity of being is held to be capable of adequate proof, however, only through the testimony of Scripture; and this eternity became in the case of saints, through Christ, an unending state of holiness and of bliss. The next chapter discusses the subject of disembodied spirit, proving first the possibility that the spirit in man may exist in a disembodied condition, and then inquiring into the condition, relationships, and experiences of such a disembodied soul. The author rejects as unwarranted the notion that the soul is provided with a spiritual body at death. He then inquires into its state and experience as one of continued consciousness and of unimpaired intellectual and moral faculties, in which, as is evident from Scripture, communion with God and with other unembodied spirits may be enjoyed by the holy. Biblical proofs from both the Old and the New Testaments are here adduced; among others the descensus of our Lord into the state or condition of the dead. To the wicked this must be a state of conscious loss and misery, to be exchanged at length for a more positive state of retribution.

The reembodied spirit is next considered, with respect to the revealed fact of the resurrection, the nature both of the resurrection body, as compared with the present physical body, and of the fully glorified body in the heavenly state. The identity of the raised with the natural organism now inhabited by the soul is affirmed, though the nature of that identity is recognized as an inexplicable mystery. The glorified body will be luminous, ethereal, unchangeable, beatific.

The general discussion is closed with a presentation of moral probation as the necessary experience of man in the present life, and of the necessary termination of such probation at some point in the moral experience—a termination which from the nature of the case must be followed by an enduring state of awards. The form and way in which these awards come to the righteous and to the wicked respectively is not specially considered; but the certainty and the endless duration of this state are strongly affirmed on philosophic as well as biblical grounds. The curative or prophylactic element in law is said to be eliminated, but the punitive element remains, and this element is definitive and eternal in its action. Annihilation cannot be the result of probation or the issue of sin, neither can there be a second probation after death.

On the latter point the author is especially earnest and convincing, pronouncing the dogma not only altogether unscriptural, but without any basis in sound and just philosophy.

All in all, this little treatise may be commended as a helpful discussion of topics now attracting very wide attention, and around which much of both speculative and practical error seems to be crystallizing. The more faithfully such topics are discussed by such competent minds, the more surely will such error be rejected, and the truth of God be glorified.

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LANE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, CINCINNATI.

JESUS CHRIST THE PROOF OF CHRISTIANITY. By JOHN F. SPALDING, S.T.D., Bishop of Colorado. Milwaukee, Wis.: The Young Churchman Co., 1891. 12mo, pp. 220, \$1; by mail, \$1.10.

Next to the difficulty of writing a good book is the difficulty of finding a good title for it; or, perhaps, rather the difficulty of finding a good title is the former and the greater. For the title is, so to speak, the problem to be solved, the proposition to be demonstrated, the subject to be expounded and illustrated; and unless an author has these clearly in his head he cannot write a really good book about them. Now what is the meaning of this proposition—the proposition to be demonstrated in Bishop Spalding's sermons—*Jesus Christ (is) the Proof of Christianity?* The subject of the proposition is the *Proof of Christianity*; and of this it is affirmed that it is not arithmetical—e.g., nor chemical, nor derived from the history of Julius Cæsar, but] *Jesus Christ*. What is the meaning of *Christianity* in the subject? Is it a statement of facts, or a system of doctrines founded upon those facts? In that case *Jesus Christ* and *Christianity* are two names for exactly the same thing, and neither can prove the other. Is Christianity a form of human society, an ecclesiastical polity, a set of institutions such as religious orders, a loosely connected system of churches differing widely from each other, like the Anglican and Roman churches? That Christianity is no doubt well known to history, and if that is what Bishop Spalding means, this title is identical with this proposition, *That form of human society called Christianity, including its developments and corruptions and present condition, is proved by Jesus Christ*. But is it proved as a fact or as something right, Divine, beneficial, and the like? It is hard to see how or where Jesus Christ proved what happened to Christianity in the reign of Henry VIII. It is hard to see how anybody could prove that at the present time the papacy and the Reformed churches are all right, Divine, and beneficial. Probably Bishop Spalding means that anybody who believes the Church to be what he believes it to be can only account for it by accepting what the Church says about Jesus Christ. That is to say, everybody who believes *everything* that A says believes *each one* of the things A says; which is a very harmless and perfectly useless proposition. It is not at all surprising that the obscurity of the title corresponds to the obscurity or irrelevance of the lectures or sermons.

The first sermon, "Jesus Christ Witnessed to by Prophecy," is based wholly upon an exegesis which may, without offence, be called at least old-fashioned. The "higher criticism," at its minimum of admittedly demonstrated results, has assuredly modified the argument from prophecy.