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THE NINETY-FIVE THESES IN THEIR THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

"A poor peasant's son, then a diligent student, an humble monk, and, finally, a modest, industrious scholar, Martin Luther had already exceeded the half of the life-time allotted to him, when—certainly with the decision characteristic of him, but with all the reserve imposed by his position in life and the immediate purpose of his action—he determined to subject the religious conceptions which lay at the basis of the indulgence-usages of the time to an examination in academic debate." This singularly comprehensive and equally singularly accurate statement of Paul Kalkoff's is worth quoting because it places us at once at the right point of view for forming an estimate of the Ninety-Five Theses which Luther, in prosecution of the purpose thus intimated, posted on the door of the Castle-Church at Wittenberg on the fateful October 31, 1517. It sets clearly before us the Luther who posted the Theses. It was—as he describes himself, indeed, in their heading—Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Theology, Ordinary Professor of Theology in the University of Wittenberg. And it indicates to us with equal clearness the nature of the document which he posted. It consists of heads for a discussion designed to elucidate the truth with respect to the subject with which it deals—as again Luther himself tells us in its heading. We have to do here in a word with an academic document, prepared by an academic teacher, primarily for an academic purpose. All that the Theses were to become grows out of this fundamental fact. We have to reckon, of course, with the manner of man this Professor of Theology was; with the conception he held of the

"The hairs of our head are all numbered. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth." His providence is a universal fact, and every providence is special. It is not true, that evolution represents "the manufacturing process"; that God was competent to make its machinery entirely adequate to perfect the manufacturing; and that he does not need nor intend to interfere or do any part of it by hand' (p. 100). On the contrary, Scripture tolerates no such drastic conception. Whatever God could have done or might have done, he is continually recreating souls that were "dead in trespasses and sins": regeneration is not the result of evolution; it is the answer to the demand arising out of the inadequacy of evolution: not only is God's own hand on the evolutionary process at every point; but for "the purpose of making the world better, as well as for the purpose of advancing the work that natural law and evolution are engaged on, he has planned to interfere. In short, our author's whole conception of God's relation to natural laws is wrong and dangerous. It is not general; it is special.

2. Dr. Murray is in error, too, when he seeks a further distinction of the Supernatural in its personal character. Every act of God is personal. It makes no difference whether he works through the forces of nature or not. The personality of the carpenter comes into play as truly when he is using a lathe as when he is handling the wood himself. And our author's failure to recognize this has led him into very serious because very practical mistakes. Thus, for example, he finds the whole purpose of the miracle to be the gratification of personal feeling on God's part. But if this be so, how is it that miracles are not being wrought to-day? We have an adequate explanation, if we hold that the purpose is to attest a special supernatural revelation; for no such revelation is now being given: we have no explanation at all, if we adopt the explanation under criticism; for God, being "the same yesterday and to-day and forever", is as personal now as ever.

Again, the power of prayer, according to Dr. Murray, lies wholly in the fact that our prayers afford the occasion for personal action on God's part. They give him the opportunity of doing what will please us and thus of gratifying his personal feelings (p. 127). In a word, our prayers prevail because God wants to be kind and neighborly. "The point is that all the value your prayer has in the case is the amount of personal favor the result would be to you, for whatever God does in the matter in answer he is going to do solely as a favor to you," (p. 127). Has, then, God no other motive? Why is it that we are directed to urge other motives? Why are we taught that the supreme motive for our prayers as well as for God's answers to them is his own glory? But enough. *Ex his disce omnia.*

Princeton.

WILLIAM BRENTON GREENE, JR.

The Survival of Jesus: A Priest's Study in Divine Telepathy.
J. HUNTLEY SKIRM, D.D. 12 mo. net \$2. George Doran Co., New York.

The author is a clergyman of the Church of England.

He writes in the character of 'John Desmond', who in a quest after a new theology converses with different friends and sets down his meditations in monologue.

His underlying philosophy may be summed up in three propositions: that most things that we know worth knowing we know by 'intuition'; that life is interchange of selves; and that persons thus interchange themselves telepathically.

This last is his discovery, the first principle of a new science. Precisely what he means by telepathy is not clear; but it is that which is common in interchange of thought and will between two persons still in the flesh, whether with or without a discernible medium between two persons one in the flesh and one 'dead' or 'discarnate', and between two discarnate persons. The basic 'fact' of his new science is exchange of thought and will between those still 'incarnate' and those 'discarnate', as also between two still incarnate without any known means of communication; for such telepathic communication he accepts as fact.

More controlling, however, in his thinking, though he does not seem to be aware of it, is his definition of life: it is organism and environment creating each other; it is interchange of thought and will between two persons; it is mutual sacrifice. One cannot live; two must live by each other, if either lives,—Father and Son, God and Man, Jesus and Disciple.

Applying this principle (for his three principles are one, life and telepathy being names for the same thing, and intuition being one part of this telepathic life), our author makes out, that God lives in Jesus the Man and Jesus the Man in God, which is the divinity of Christ; that Jesus as man lived in his disciples and they in him in the days of his flesh, by telepathic exchange of thought and will, of faith, lived thus in and from them in the three days he was in Hades, and in the forty days after his resurrection, while he had a 'body' in some sense, and lives thus in the days since, while now he has not a 'body' in the same sense; that the 'atonement' of Jesus the Man into God and of God into Jesus was consummated in his death, his full surrender to God; that atonement as between Jesus and man is begun and consummated in this mutual sacrifice, this interchange of faith between him and them; and that in the same telepathic way the many become the one Church.

What Dr. Skirm accomplishes is to produce a vague combination of words in which some like himself who are in Christ may construe their experience, and by which others may mistake their religious feelings for life in Christ. It can do no great harm; for it must utterly fail to found a new science or a new theology.

For it has two inherent weaknesses. First it builds on telepathy, something unproven and, if proven, too vague to base a science on. Second, it cuts out propitiation by the death of Christ, and yet en-

deavors to retain Christ as Savior. The Bible stands in the way. To eliminate propitiation from the Bible is impossible; to acknowledge that propitiation is taught in the Bible, and yet reject this teaching, is to discredit the Book too much to save its Hero for faith. Jesus Christ is a propitiation or a puzzle.

And why will men still hope to discover by defining simple ideas? To define life as 'interchange' of life gets nowhere; to define life as 'interchange' of what is not life gets nowhere. Is not 'interchange' more complete than 'life'? Or if life is defined as self-interchange, what is 'self'? This method is not intuition or observation or inference; it is confusion, delusive confusion.

F. P. RAMSAY.

EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

The Social Teachings of The Prophets and Jesus. By CHARLES FOSTER KENT, PH.D., LITT.D., Woolsey Professor of Biblical Literature in Yale University. 8 vo; pp. XIII, 364. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons. 1917.

As Biblical Theology sets forth the theological doctrines of the Bible in the order and form of their historical development, so Prof. Kent would exhibit in like manner its sociological teachings. Indeed, he has given us a complete and admirable treatise on Biblical Sociology under the following heads: "The Social Ideals of the Pre-Exilic Prophets," "the Social Ideals of the Exilic and Post-Exilic Prophets and Sages," "The Social Ideals of Jesus," and "The Social Ideals of Jesus' Followers"—under these heads he has covered the whole subject. He has done this adequately, discriminatingly, in a way to make and hold the whole church, not to say the whole world, indebted to him.

The value of his work is much enhanced by his reference, in the case of every sociological teaching presented, to the Bible itself and to his citation in full in every instance of the passage referred to. Some may object that this favors those who are too indolent to look up references for themselves. This is true, but it is scarcely to the point. The author's aim is not primarily disciplinary. It is to present and to get understood the sociology of the Bible, and nothing could so conduce to this as the actual setting forth of the appropriate texts.

Not the least important part of the book is the "Appendix". This consists of three sections. The first gives a "Selected Bibliography". This is extensive and informing. It is not, however, nor does it claim to be, complete. Yet it must be added in passing that there are omissions, as Prof. Clow's "Christ in the Social Order," which we could neither justify nor explain even in a bibliography much more restricted. Section II contains a great number of admirably selected and stated "Subjects for Discussion and Investigation". These reveal