

# THE BULLETIN

—OF THE—

## Western Theological Seminary

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A Review Devoted to the Interests of  
Theological Education

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## WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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### Commencement 1913

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The Commencement program of the Seminary opened Sunday, May the fourth. The sermon to the graduating class was preached by President Kelso in the North Presbyterian Church, Sunday morning at eleven o'clock. The same afternoon at three o'clock the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was celebrated in the Seminary Chapel, Dr. Schaff presiding. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday were occupied with oral examinations before the Examining Committee of the Board of Directors. Thursday, May the eighth, Commencement Day proper, was crowded with important meetings and reunions of graduates. The Board of Directors held their annual meeting in the Seminary Chapel at ten o'clock and heard the annual report of the President of the Seminary, which showed marked progress financially, \$117,215.83 having been added to the permanent funds during the past year. The Commencement exercises were held in the North Presbyterian Church at 3 P. M., and were immediately followed by the induction of the Rev. James Henry Snowden, D.D., LL.D., into the Chair of Systematic Theology. The charge to the Professor was delivered by the Rev. Maitland Alexander, D.D., LL.D. Nineteen seniors received the regular diploma of the Seminary, and the degree of Bachelor of Divinity was conferred upon three graduate students. All these graduates have received calls, three being under appointment of the Board of Foreign Missions.

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Prof. Curtis thus sums up the historical character of the narratives of the Judges; "The contents of the book of Judges taken as a whole are legendary rather than historical". "But in the legends of the judges lie embedded historical facts". Thus "undoubtedly historical" are the foundations of the story of Deborah. "The song of Deborah is the most ancient complete piece of writing in the Old Testament, and was composed at the time of the victory which it celebrates". True history lies behind Gideon and Abimelech, and "For sermonic purposes no story of Judges is equal to that of Gideon". He reads the Jephthah story as the remembrance of a true human sacrifice.

But "In the stories of Samson we find little of real history", according to our commentator, and "the Samson of the Book of Judges is certainly half mythical, and his exploits are not inaptly compared with those of the Greek Hercules". The Dan story, on the other hand, in its essential elements, "is certainly plausible and on no good grounds can its historicity be denied".

An attempt is made to solve the problem of chronology by eliminating the periods of foreign service and oppression, and retaining only the periods of rest or the judgeships. The problem is hardly thus solved.

The Bibliography is intended for the English reader, but it would have proved more useful had it contained some suggestions as to relative values, or better still, had it been briefer.

We would call especial attention to the comments on the text, with their helpful suggestions as to corruptions and possible emendations. Of great value to the busy student are his Archaeological notes, covering matters of geographical interest and unfamiliar customs. The index, brief but covering the whole book, notes and introduction as well as text, is very convenient.

We wonder that this series has used the version of 1881 (or 1885 so far as the O. T. is concerned) in preference to the more widely used and accurate one of 1901, by the American Committee. And again, we felt the inconvenience of the absence of any clear divisions in the notes. The excellent division headings throughout the text might very advantageously have been introduced also into the unbroken pages of the notes.

A careful study of this little book has shown me that the student world is to be congratulated upon this, one of the last products of the scholarship and pen of the lamented author, and we thank Dr. Madsen for bringing the work to its completion and to our hands.

FRANK H. RIDGLEY, '03.

Lincoln University, Pa.

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**The Rule of Faith.** By Rev. W. P. Paterson, D.D. New York: George H. Doran Company. 1912. pp. 439. \$1.50 net.

From time to time Scotland gives to the world a great book in the department of theology. The well-known natural bent of the Scotch mind to metaphysical and particularly theological thought probably has much to do with this, as has also the fact that ministers and professors there take more time for serious

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study and give less to the multitudinous outside calls which beset the course of their brethren in America. Whatever the reasons are however, the fact remains that the Scottish manse and college have given us an astonishing number of books of the highest merit in this department. The volume before us takes its place in the first rank of such contributions. Its author, the Rev. William P. Paterson, D.D., professor of divinity in Edinburgh University, is justly held to be one of the ablest men in the Church of Scotland. His published writings have been very limited in amount but have been distinguished by their author's full acquaintance with the relevant literature, original and carefully matured judgment, insight into the depths of his subject, and signal ability to present his conclusions clearly and simply with acute and cogent logic. In "The Rule of Faith" these qualities find the amplest play in the treatment of themes of vital interest and supreme importance to every student of theology. The result has been the production of a great book.

As the title suggests, Prof. Paterson has set for himself the task of examining the doctrinal content involved in the great spiritual fact which we call Christianity. He seeks to discover and separate its essential features from those that are merely accidental or of comparative unimportance. His conviction that in Christianity the world has received God's choicest gift is evident on every page. He is sure that as it operates within the souls of men it gives them the very salvation of which they stand in need. He makes clear his belief that it is because of its practical value, its definite achievements, for their spiritual life that it has so taken hold upon the hearts of men of all races and conditions. And he handles the forms, in which those differing with him in thought have expressed their beliefs, with a broad spirit of charity which always credits their authors with the highest motives and the best intentions. It is a cardinal virtue of his evaluation of each of the great systems of theological thought that he sees so clearly the practical value for spiritual life of its doctrines. And he deliberately proceeds upon a theory, which he makes so clear that it seems irresistible, namely, that doctrinal systems are not logically built up by the purely formal and systematic development of some given original content of revelation but that those who have first felt the power of the salvation of God in their own lives have, after their several abilities and in the varying degrees of their spiritual experience, sought to establish and systematize the ideas which were calculated to reproduce in others the salvation they had themselves secured. In other words, Dr. Paterson believes that religious value as men have felt it has played a larger part in determining the course of the construction of theological systems than abstract theoretical considerations. His governing idea is that we have to approach theology with an intense realization that our primary datum is a religion which, as such, undertakes to produce practical results, and our primary certitude is that the Christian religion is an effective instrument for grappling with the heavy spiritual tasks which it undertakes to accomplish. It is fitly compared to the medical art which is practical in its purpose and yet can only operate on a basis of knowledge. Christianity necessarily involves a body of truths properly regarded as an integral part of the revelation. Its intellectual element on the other hand is presumed to be

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limited by a principle of parsimony which does not permit it to extend beyond what is required to make its provisions operative and effective. The authentic content then of revealed truth is the knowledge of God and man, and of the acts of God, which was needed to ensure the efficacy of the Christian religion.

Christian thought is generally admitted to embrace the most important of the subjects which have roused the interest of the human mind. Its judgments, if taken as valid, are conceived as possessing an unparalleled practical value for humanity, even that of salvation. In origin it claims to be unique as a peculiar and immediate gift of God, and it has been welcomed by the human mind with striking receptiveness, confidence, and gratitude. A general survey of the history of Christianity, moreover, cannot fail to produce a profound impression of its power as it has wrought so wonderfully through the ages on the lives of men in every rank of life. And yet in spite of all its practical efficacy and evident value, the precise repository in which the divine gift has been placed and the method by which it is to be laid hold of and made available for human wants have been subjects of persistent controversy. Whenever disbelief in any of its many forms has asserted itself the need for justifying the source and criterion of Christian knowledge has called forth apologetic effort. This task has been made doubly difficult by reason of the necessity under which the apologist has labored of framing a sufficiently definite and generally acceptable *thesis probanda* before he develops the argument by which he seeks to prove it. The divisions of the Christian Church brought into prominence the serious differences which exist on this question. The Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches, for instance, differ as to what precisely constitutes Christian doctrine. The churches ranking as Protestant have their various and divergent answers to this question. And Rationalistic theologians give still other answers to it. Dr. Paterson accordingly has divided his book into two almost equal parts. In the first he treats of the seat of doctrine as it has been located and set forth by the different schools of theology. In the second part the substance of doctrine as developed by these same schools is examined and one is compared with another.

Directing our attention then to the first of these parts, where the seat of doctrine is in question, we find that the following systems are examined in order, a chapter being devoted to each: Roman Catholic theory; Protestant theory; The School of the Spirit, including Quakers and Mystics; The Rationalistic principle, which deals with the work of the Deists and the modern philosophers who have treated theological themes; The Criterion of Feeling as it is employed by Schleiermacher, Schweizer, Frank, and more recently by James; and Biblical Eclecticism, where Ritschl and his school represent one branch, and Bruce, Harnack, and Wendt another, with their watchword 'back to Christ'. His Conclusions from this survey are that Protestantism has been right in its main positions when it held that the ultimate source of Christian doctrine is a unique and peculiar self-disclosure of God; that the one trustworthy channel of its transmission is the sacred books of canonical Scripture; and that these records are to be interpreted not by ecclesiastical or rationalistic standards but by believing thought working in dependence on the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Yet

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he finds that each of the schools studied lays emphasis upon an element of truth for which place must be found in a complete theory of the source and norm of Christian doctrine. There is a sense in which all theology must be rational since it must rest on grounds capable of being stated and defended; and further, faith itself, on which so much responsibility must be laid in interpreting and appropriating the revelation is none other than reason suffused by higher influences and operating under peculiar conditions. The elaborated Roman Catholic theory, teaching so much that is improbable and unsupported by Scripture, does ampler justice than Protestantism to the idea of using the test of genuine catholicity as a note of the Christian truth which has the corroboration of the Spirit of truth. The School of the Spirit has not substantiated its claim to have made real contribution, by private revelation, to the knowledge of divine things that came through the Christian revelation, but it has done valuable service in protesting that the same Spirit that worked in the Apostles works ever in the Church, not only as the Lord and Giver of life, but also as the light of all minds that know the truth, and as their aid in the administration of the principles of the Gospel. The School of Feeling failed in its attempt to derive theology exclusively from a subjective source, but its work has not been in vain for it has taught us that it is the function of experience to witness not merely to the divine origin of the Scriptures but to the matter of the Christian revelation, and that it is characteristic of the indubitably attested authentic matter of the Christian revelation that it is attested and verified in experience.

The second portion of Dr. Paterson's book deals with the definition of the nature and intellectual content of the Christian religion. It is necessary to face this task because it is a matter of fact that for Protestantism the actual norm of doctrine has always been a scheme of saving truth extracted from the Scriptures and never the Scriptures themselves in their entirety. The content of Scripture, moreover, has been unfolded by three centuries of Protestant thought in doctrinal systems which represent almost every shade of conflict and dissonance. After an exceedingly interesting and able analysis of the elements which must be included in any adequate account of the nature of the Christian religion, Prof. Paterson takes up in order the interpretations of its doctrinal content which have prevailed in the previously enumerated schools. We cannot enter into any detailed discussion of them in the limits of this review. Let us again turn to his conclusions. He finds that in spite of its divisions there is a groundwork of the Christian religion which is traceable in the divergent forms and which invests all with an unmistakable family likeness. Divergence from the true type does not proceed beyond a certain length, for protest is always raised against loss and defacement and a successful attempt made to restore its purity and integrity. Catholicism has sought to enrich the Christian religion by importing into it theories and practices which belonged to an earlier and a lower religious plane, and whose value for faith and life is only illusory. Too little emphasis is laid on the power of truth. Too much reliance is placed on the system of sacramental grace. Rationalism, on the other hand, has greatly impoverished Christianity, making too much of ideas in treating them as a substitute for the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Patristic Orthodoxy did a work of real religious value in its dogmatic definitions of the Godhead and the Person of Christ. But it was one sided. Its ascetic ideal led to the undervaluation of much that was most important, and in its attitude toward the all-important topic of the conditions of salvation it was indefinite or superficial. Before Anselm the bearing of the work of Christ upon justification or the forgiveness of sins was not investigated. It was the signal achievement and the permanent service of Protestantism that it possessed the insight to penetrate to the core of the Christian religion, that it did justice to the main aspects of that religion as a God-guaranteed salvation resting on the basis of grace, and in particular, that it worked out the theory of the individual appropriation of salvation with remarkable consistency, profundity, and impressiveness. In its understanding of the essential parts of Christianity and in its realization of the organic connection of the main divisions of doctrine, it did work which cannot be superseded. There is, however, a widespread feeling that in the systematic treatises of Protestant orthodoxy there is a mass of doctrinal matter, suspect in origin and truth, mixed up with the treasured and imperishable elements of the Gospel, and handled as if all were supported by the same authority. This fact has given to theological rationalism its vitality, and the mission of modern theology, especially of the schools of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, was not only to prevent the radical transformation of Christianity at the hand of rationalism but to relieve it of matter which had become an intellectual burden, a hindrance rather than a help in the life of the spirit. In doing this, however, it is hardly to be doubted that both schools crossed the line at which the recasting of a doctrinal system became a process of mutilation.

Among the tasks which confront theology to-day Dr. Paterson finds that a distinction must be drawn between the integral parts of the Gospel in regard to which Christian faith has an absolute assurance and the related problems which have to be attacked in a more philosophic spirit and in regard to which we may not hope to attain to more than a probable opinion. The *modus operandi* of the atoning work of Christ is not settled by revelation but is rather a problem raised by it. Every thinking church properly tolerates a variety of solutions here. The full treatment of the questions regarding human origins is felt in many quarters not to be vital to the exposition of the Christian Gospel. In the realm of eschatology also the degree of revealed knowledge has been exaggerated. In the treatment of the topics connected with the individual appropriation of salvation there is need for revised work which will take account of the manifestations in modern life of Christian experience and character and which do not altogether conform to the type considered classic.

Prof. Paterson brings his book to a close with this fine paragraph, "The central content of the Christian revelation, the gospel which forms the soul and power of the Christian religion is on an altogether different footing from the speculative utterances made by theology in the outlying provinces of human thought. It passes down from generation to generation under the protection of experience and God. It is accredited afresh from age to age by the fact that it is an engine for doing spiritual work of the most valuable kind, and that those who make use of it find that it makes

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good its promises. It is also authenticated by a conviction of its truth wrought in the hearts of those who live by it, which shows such strength, tenacity, and energizing activity that they confidently interpret it as the gift of God through the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Religion, we are told by the writer to the Hebrews, has its disciplines of dislodgment, but it is to the end that the things which cannot be shaken may stand out more clearly in their changeless grandeur and their immovable strength. The mind is ever interested in novelties; but the heart ever seeks the permanent and unchangeable, and is assured that its quest is not vain, according to the song of our pilgrimage:

His truth at all times firmly stood  
And shall from age to age endure”.

In conclusion we cannot do better than quote the words of Sir William Robertson Nicoll in the *British Weekly* where he says of *The Rule of Faith*: “This is a really great book, written with full knowledge, and with a breadth, a sanity, and a calmness which must impress every reader. Dr Paterson must now proceed to give us a reconstructed dogmatic. For this eminent service he is more clearly marked than almost any other man. He is not merely a great historian and critic; he is also a thinker. The passages in this book which will be best remembered are those which show a powerful and quiet originality”.

JOHN W. CHRISTIE, '07.

Van Wert, Ohio.

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**Nine Great Preachers.** By the Rev. Prof. Albert H. Currier, D.D.  
Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 14 Beacon St. 1912. \$1.50 net.  
Postage 15c.

This is an admirable book of the kind. We say “of the kind” advisedly. It is a good book for the layman who desires to obtain no more than a general but exact idea of the lives and labors of the men who are thus introduced to him. It is a good book for the minister who wishes to refresh his memory concerning the main events of which he has already studied carefully and in detail. It is interesting and suggestive. The historical material is judiciously chosen and well arranged. It serves a very useful purpose. We would heartily recommend it to a certain class of students who are content with the fragmentary and who are not likely to pursue their studies any further. The thorough scholar will not be attracted to it.

The “Nine Preachers” who are passed in review are Chrysostom, Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard Baxter, Bossuet, Bunyan, Frederick W. Robertson, Alexander MacLaren, Henry Ward Beecher, and Phillips Brooks. The first question which occurs to the reviewer as he opens the book is “Why these nine?” and it remains with him to the end. Apparently the author has chosen them because they represent a large variety of Christian communions, because they cover successive centuries, and because, in the author’s judgment each is the greatest preacher of his age.