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Communications for the Editor and all business matters should be addressed to

REV. JAMES A. KELSO, Ph. D., D. D.,
731 Ridge Ave., N. S. Pittsburgh, Pa.

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The Value to the Preacher of the Great Poets

The Rev. Robert Christie, D. D., LL. D.

No attentive reader of good literature can have failed to note the frequent appeal which is made to the great poets. Even the "myriad-minded" Plato draws often upon Homer, whilst an inspired Apostle points to "what certain of their own poets have said". And what writer of the English speaking people fails to call Shakespeare to his support if that genius has spoken on the subject in hand? Speakers also are prone to light up or clinch an argument with a quotation in verse. And if such quotation be apt, it has a weight of authority far beyond any similar sentiment in prose. From this it would appear that these "sons of song" speak as men having peculiar authority. This indeed seems to be everywhere conceded. But did you ever stop and ask yourself what it is in their productions that gives them this weight of influence? Why, for example, does a stanza from Tennyson count for more than a paragraph from Gladstone on the same subject? It cannot result from superior scholarship, since the attainments of the statesman were beyond those of the poet. At first blush the effect might be ascribed to the form in which the poet

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orate index, add to the usefulness of the volume. We have noted one or two errors. On p. 89 Robertson's work on "The Religion of Israël" is referred to as the Gifford Lectures; instead of Gifford, Baird should be read; Professor Robertson never delivered any lectures on the Gifford Foundation. Again, on p 429 there is a typographical error; instead of Neissbach, Weissbach should be read.

James A. Kelso.

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The Holy Spirit in Thought and Experience. By T. Rees, B. A., M. A.
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1915. 12 mo. pp 212, 75c.

This volume is one of the admirable series of handbooks which Scribner's are publishing under the general title "Studies In Theology". Its author is the principal of the Independent College at Bangor in North Wales.

In his preface he refers to the fact that it is a frequent and well founded complaint that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been strangely neglected by theologians. In recent years, however, he notices that there has been a revival of interest in this study, and in the book under review he has set for himself the task of gathering the materials and presenting a coherent account of the formulation of this doctrine.

The historical method is employed. The range of the book covers the development of the idea of the Spirit from the crudest notions entertained by men of the earliest Old Testament times down to the latest efforts of religious psychology and philosophy to find a place for it in their systems.

This is a tremendous task and the stern compression of the vast amount of available material into so small a space has not only necessitated the omission of much that would have been valuable but has also been markedly detrimental to the lucidity of the work as we have it. One feels as he reads that he is handling a conveniently bound reprint of an article which was written originally for an encyclopaedia. The awe-inspiring array of authorities cited at the end of the volume and in the footnotes does nothing to dissipate this impression. But we frequently wish that a little more space had been used by our author in making their contributions to his thesis comprehensive enough to be really enlightening.

As a matter of fact, after all its condensations, the book treats only a portion of the content suggested by its title. "The Holy Spirit in Thought" is dealt with, but the experiential aspects of the Spirit's activity are treated in the most meagre way.

The first three chapters trace the development of the idea of the Spirit in Hebrew thought from the primitive conceptions that gather about the abnormal phenomena attributed to the Spirit's action in the lives of such men as Samson, through the period of the great Old Testament prophets, when the Spirit was recognized as being "the very consciousness and activity of Yahweh", down to its emergence in the thought of Philo and the Alexandrian school when the Hebrew idea of the Spirit is fused with the Greek notion of the

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Logos, the principle of order in nature, of reason in man, and of the revelation of God to the Soul.

Chapters Four and Five discuss the universal belief in the agency of spirits, good and bad, in the first two Christian centuries; the special gifts which the Church claimed to possess because of the operation of spiritual beings; and the spiritual phenomena observable in every department of the moral and religious life of believers, which were attributed to the Holy Spirit. Special attention is given to Paul's rather extensive teaching about the Spirit and his tendency to identify the exalted Christ with the Holy Spirit is noted as significant. Within the limits of the New Testament times the earlier Jewish theory of the Holy Spirit as a heavenly hypostasis of the power and wisdom of God is found gradually giving place to the more distinct and familiar figure and features of Jesus Christ in heaven, who assumes the Spirit's place and functions, qualities and glories, in addition to His Own, while the Spirit tends to become a tradition and name, scarcely to be distinguished in being and operation from the Lord in heaven who also dwells in and with His people on earth.

Chapter Six, "The Spirit and the Logos", contains a survey of the contributions of the ante-Nicene theology to our doctrine. This period witnessed the elimination from orthodox thought of the ideas both of Gnostic pluralism and monarchian Unitarianism as these were applied to the Spirit in relation to God and Christ. It saw also such an advance in the Logos doctrine that its earlier revelation hypostasis now came to be considered as the eternal essence of deity.

In Chapter Seven, "The Holy Spirit in the Trinity", the Arian controversy is given the credit of leading Athanasius to recognize the fact that the deity of the Son and the Spirit stand or fall together. The three Cappadocians and their followers in the East amplified and systematized the Athanasian Conception, and rendered the highest service to Christian truth by affirming the deity of the Holy Spirit, thus completing the doctrine of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit in the Eastern Church.

Chapter Eight, "God, the Holy Spirit", treats of the progress of thought in the Western Church on our subject. Augustine's doctrine, which embodied the affirmation that the Spirit proceeded from both the Father and the Son, was made a part of the "Athanasian" creed and became the chief doctrinal cause of the schism between the Greek and the Latin Churches.

During the Middle Ages practical interest in the Spirit was lost from the consciousness of the Church. But the Reformers, with their emphasis upon the inward virtues of the Spirit as the illuminator of the inspired word, renewed interest in our doctrine. And the work of such men as Owen, Goodwin, Barclay, Spener, and Wesley has defined the distinct spheres of operation of the persons in the Godhead, corresponding to their metaphysical distinctions.

The last Chapter, "Summary and Conclusion", rapidly surveys the ground traversed and points out the unsatisfactory features that are so evident in our doctrine in the light of modern thought. The book closes with a reiteration of the need that exists for a re-statement of this doctrine in terms of the more personal and concrete conception of God, and of the more empirical interpretation of knowledge and morality which the modern mind has gained.

Our chief criticism of the book is that it brings so little to the

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solution of the problems which it raises. It follows the evolution of the doctrine of the Spirit and states its various phases as they appeared in history, but in the end it is satisfied with the statement of these problems. It does not attempt anything Constructive by way of outlining a more adequate grounding of the facts than we possess at present. It is not a particularly easy book to read. We are not sure that we are very much wiser or better at the end of its perusal than we were at its beginning. Of one thing only we are sure — the whole course of reflection upon this doctrine as recorded in these pages is proof of its abstruseness.

We recommend this book to earnest students of dogmatic theology — and to no others.

In our judgment in its appeal to the interest of the average pastor it falls far below the general level of the series of which it is a part.

John W. Christie, '07

Van Wert, Ohio.

✓ **Christ in the Social Order.** By the Rev. W. M. Clow, D.D., Professor of Pastoral Theology and Christian Ethics in the United Free Church College, Glasgow. New York: George H. Doran Company. Pp. 295.

Dr. Clow defines his book as "an endeavor to set the sources of our social unrest in the light of the ethics of Christ". In pursuing this end he departs from the method followed in many books dealing with the social applications of Christianity, in that he gives us, not so much a discussion of specific teachings of the New Testament as a consideration of different phases of the social problem from a distinctively Christian point of view. The author begins by defining social unrest as a disorder, a disease of society. This very inadequate definition suggests the explanation of what is perhaps the one considerable defect of the book—its somewhat unsympathetic tone. It would appear that in the author's view the ideal condition of society is a kind of static equilibrium. Whatever disturbs that equilibrium is abnormal, and must be eliminated by discovering and removing its cause. There seems to be no conception of society as living, with the inherent necessity for change and movement which produces what our author calls the disorder of social unrest. But notwithstanding the inadequacy of this fundamental conception, the volume before us is one of the best in every way of the many which have been written on this subject in recent years. It is characterized by logical arrangement, clearness and force of statement, and a quiet common sense which goes far to make up for what at times almost becomes stiffness in the author's attitude toward certain social questions. The preliminary discussion of the chief causes of social unrest, the three main forms in which the social problem presents itself, and the various methods that have been proposed for the solution of it, prepares the way for an admirable discussion of the social ideal of Jesus, which in turn leads on to the main constructive portion of the book. Here the author takes up one after another the three chief forms of the social problem—the relations between wealth and poverty, the relations between capital and labor, and the so-called "revolt of woman". He examines each of these in the light of the