

# The Princeton Theological Review

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## HEBREWS, THE EPISTLE OF THE DIATHEKE

So far we have considered the Epistle's idea of revelation only from the practical point of view.\* It has, however, a more theoretical side and this also shows the influence of the covenant-conception. More than any other New Testament document Hebrews develops what might be called a philosophy of the history of revelation. This is partly due to the fact that the writer is theologically inclined in general, and evidently attaches importance to the doctrinal presentation of the Christian faith. It would be a mistake to explain this from speculative tendencies followed for their own sake. Of a purely scholastic interest there is no trace whatever. But the writer entertains a firm belief in the effectiveness of doctrinal enlightenment as a remedial method where the soundness and balance of practical Christianity are endangered. We certainly gain the impression that from the outset he brings to the writing of the Epistle a well-defined doctrinal conception of the structure of the Christian religion. It can cause no wonder that, when a mind of this cast is led to occupy itself with the history of revelation, as is actually the case in our Epistle, a more or less philosophical or theological construction of the history of revelation results. We should, moreover, remember, that from the very earliest times the covenant-idea stood not merely in the service of revealed religion in general, but had also lent itself to the very particular use of marking the historic progress of the movement of redemption and special revelation. The successive stages of God's redemptive and revealing work in the pre-Christian era are measured by successive covenants, each introducing new forces and principles and each imparting to the ensuing

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\* In this REVIEW, 1915 (xiii), pp. 587-632.

## A THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY\*

The fact that I preceded you in the office into which you are now being inducted may make it appropriate that the duty of delivering the customary charge to you on this occasion should devolve upon me. But for this fact, it would have seemed more natural for this service to fall to the lot of one of my colleagues in the Board of Directors who is still engaged in the active work of the ministry and who therefore might reasonably be expected to speak more sympathetically and out of a more intimate knowledge respecting the relation of the Seminary to the Church than I can be expected to do. But whatever my shortcomings may be, I claim to be behind none of my colleagues in the warmth with which, in the name of the Board of Directors, I welcome you to this most important position and in my appreciation of your special qualifications for the office to which you have been so cordially elected.

You come to the duties of this office out of the active work of the pastorate and bring with you the large experience you have gained in two of the most important charges in the Presbyterian Church. You know, therefore, the importance of thorough training for the minister and the use of that training in the weekly ministrations of the sanctuary. You have been and are still a member of some of the most important administrative agencies of our Church. You are therefore exceptionally qualified for bringing the work of the Seminary to the notice of the Church, and the work of the Church to the attention of the Seminary. It is moreover a matter of gratification to us all that the first year of your service as President of the Seminary synchronizes with the year of your elevation to the moderatorship of the General Assembly, during which period you are entrusted with the care of all the churches.

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\*The charge to the Reverend J. Ross Stevenson, D.D., LL.D., on the occasion of inauguration as President of Princeton Theological Seminary.

But not the least of your qualifications for this position, though I name it last, is the fact that you have yourself been a professor in a theological seminary; that consequently you know the value and the methods of scientific investigation in the several departments of theology and that you are in no danger of allowing a zeal for popularizing the teaching of the Seminary to blind you to the importance of maintaining a high standard of scholarly efficiency in the professorial chairs.

I congratulate you upon the prospect of being associated with a body of men in the Faculty, the Board of Directors and the Board of Trustees with whom it will be a delight to work. I am speaking out of a happy memory of my own association with these men when I promise you that you will find them sympathetic and responsive to your wishes in regard to the plans you may form for the Seminary's interest and that, as far as they can do so without a surrender of their own proper sense of responsibility, they will cooperate with you to the full extent of their ability. I will go so far as to say—and I think I may say it without offense—that, if your experience shall at all resemble mine, there will be times when you will discover that their judgment is better than your own.

I am so confident that my views in regard to the work of this Institution are practically coincident with yours that I shall not put this address in the form of a charge but will rather allow myself the liberty of speaking frankly in regard to some matters pertaining to the function of the theological seminary in general and of this Seminary in particular. I shall not attempt to define the duties of the President of this Institution or to indicate how they should be performed. A man called to this office must interpret the duties of the office for himself and shape his method of performing them according to his own conscientious judgment. Were I to enter into the field of suggestion, to which I might be tempted by virtue of my former relation to the Seminary, I might possibly transcend the limits of good

taste and unwittingly be even guilty of what might be regarded as an invasion of personal rights. I hope, however, that, without running too great a risk of trespassing on forbidden territory, I may allow myself the privilege of making a few remarks touching some contemporary issues in the sphere of theological instruction; but in doing this I feel that I may count in the main upon your full concurrence.

This Theological Seminary is a training camp for soldiers of the cross. It is also a fortress. I may have occasion to make use of both these metaphors in the course of my remarks, but I have more immediately before my mind the idea that the Seminary is a place for the training of men for the work of the ministry.

There is a tendency just now to put special emphasis upon the practical side of theological instruction, partly because this phase of the minister's training was relatively neglected in former days and partly also, I have no doubt, because the complicated and multifarious duties of the minister of a modern City Church are in such decided contrast with the duties devolving upon ministers belonging to the older generation. That this demand for more practical training should be met there can be no question, but in meeting it, great care should be taken not to lessen the requirements for thorough study of the great departments of theology. Students naturally desire to receive special instruction in regard to the practical work of the pastorate. This to them is their nearest objective. They accordingly wish to know how to organize the various societies that now form a part of a well equipped congregation; how to manage the Sunday School; how to administer the ordinances; how to solemnize marriage and how to bury the dead. Ministers too, who have had to learn these things by experience after entering upon the work of the ministry, sometimes come back to us and ask why they were not taught all these things in the Seminary. Now of course there is room in a theological curriculum for a great deal

of sound advice, good counsel and plain, practical directions which students should have, and which I think they may have without encroaching upon the time which should be devoted to the more laborious work of scholarly acquisition. In fact, the less formal such instruction is the more likely is it to be of practical value, but it must be evident that it is only in an imperfect way that this can prepare a young minister for meeting the practical exigencies of his calling. It would be impossible for a professor to anticipate the difficulties which a student will have to meet in the practical work of the ministry. No amount of instruction can supersede the exercise of tact and individual judgment. Experience is the best and, in many cases, the only possible teacher. You cannot teach a child to walk by giving it lectures on walking; and in respect to many a question in the sphere of practical pastoral duty I am inclined to think that the only answer possible is "solvitur ambulando"—unless you happen to own a motor car.

I notice with interest that the attention of the Seminary has recently been turned to the importance of inculcating a better method of Sunday School instruction and one that is suited to the varying degrees of mental development on the part of the pupils. I venture to hope that a rational system may be adopted, if one has not already been devised, which may save the youth of our Church from the exploitations of the pedagogical psychologists. These educational philosophers have already taken possession of the primary school in secular education. They teach children to read, we are told, by the synthetic method of recognizing words in their wholeness as pictures—instead of teaching them by the old analytic method of building them up out of their component sounds and syllables. Perhaps it is to this method that we are indebted for so much original spelling on the part of some of our correspondents, and for the distressing attempts (sometimes, I regret to say, even by preachers) to go across a familiar polysyllable without falling down. So carefully has the psychology of the child

been studied, it would appear, that the precise age when ideas of varying complexity can be mediated to the child's understanding is fully known. And this accurate knowledge of what instruction is fitting to a child, determined as it is altogether by the age of the child and in disregard for all the differing capacities of children, reminds me of those suits of ready-made clothing which we sometimes see in the shop windows, plainly marked 5-6-7-8 years, with correspondingly larger sizes for misses of 12 and boys of 14. How early in a child's life one might venture to impart to him through the parable of the Good Shepherd a spiritual lesson in respect to his relation to the Saviour I do not know, but I have been told that in using this portion of Scripture for the instruction of children of tender years the lesson of kindness to dumb animals is about as far as it is safe to go.

I am not so foolish as to suppose that a curriculum is something fixed for all time and that no change can be made in it without detriment to the great interests of theological training. I cannot, therefore, confess to a deep interest in the distribution of hours in the several departments of a theological curriculum. Whether one department gets six hours a week and another only five or four is a matter of detail that can best be left with the Faculty, where it properly belongs. But I am deeply interested in maintaining without any loss of efficiency the great and masterful branches of theological encyclopaedia, no matter how urgent the demand may be for the introduction of new subjects of study; and, in spite of the fact that ministers commonly use their Greek and Hebrew less than they ought to use them, I should deprecate any move that would make the study of the Scriptures in the original tongues an optional thing with any student who wishes to receive the diploma of this Seminary.

I recognize the importance of some of the new studies for which the plea is made that they should be made part of a theological curriculum. Great questions in social

ethics, for example, are demanding the attention of our ministers and these questions should be dealt with in the theological seminary. Sociology is knocking hard for admission at our doors and, under the right conditions, I think it should be admitted, but a Sociology of experimentation, of artificial methods of reform and of mere statistical information does not fulfill these conditions. The pathological conditions of society, as they reveal themselves in poverty, disease and crime, deserve the serious consideration of the Church and may well fall within the scope of the minister's work. But it is not so much the phenomenology of disease that deserves our attention as its etiology and its therapeutics. As to the first question we shall find that the answer is given in the old fashioned doctrine of sin, and whether the answer to the second is to be found in a war against circumstances or in a change of heart will depend upon the conception men have of the meaning of Christianity. I still adhere to the Gospel as the best and only cure for all social ills.

I am in favor of a very generous theological curriculum. The table should be liberally supplied with the delicacies as well as with the substantial meats of theological nourishment, but we must remember that men have varying appetites and, not only so, but varying capacities as well. We therefore cannot expect every student to profit alike by everything that every professor has to say. It is not what you eat but what you digest that does you good. It is only, in my judgment, as a man works his material over for his own use that it becomes part of himself and it is only as it becomes part of himself that he is benefited by it. Just how this process of mental metabolism goes on I do not know, but that is not strange for, if I am correctly informed, even in the material sphere of human physiology metabolism still has its mysteries.

I suppose I am treading on delicate ground when I venture to say a word in regard to professors. As we have already heard in the lesson from the Scriptures, there are

in a great house vessels of silver and vessels of gold, vessels of wood and vessels of earth. I suppose we all recognize that some of our friends carry their knowledge in earthen vessels, and we bear with their limitations and hope that they will bear with ours, but if we had our way we would all draw the line at the wooden ones. We professors do not ordinarily criticise one another. We recognize that there may be diversity of gifts and differences of administration. We see in these differences the evidence that a Faculty is an organization made up of human beings and not a machine. With students, on the other hand, the criticism of professors is a favorite pastime. I would not do too much to discourage it for it gives them pleasure and is, I dare say, profitable withal; for thereby is sometimes revealed an interest in theological study and a zeal for the richer development of a department which otherwise might not have attracted attention. But I think I may say that when a Board of Directors undertakes the work of academic evaluation it enters upon a somewhat difficult task. It is so hard to standardize professorial efficiency. You may for example require a student to commit to memory a hundred lines of poetry every day, when the daily task of writing a hundred lines of poetry might seem unreasonable—the call for quantity endangering the quality of the output. Professors differ: one is a great teacher; another is a great writer; still another is a great scholar; some professors are industriously busy during every waking moment of their lives and some produce the impression that they pass a great deal of their time in idleness. But let us not misjudge the seemingly idle man: incubation is not a process of violent activity and yet in the domain of natural history, under normal conditions, it is followed by very satisfactory results. I remember with reverence my teachers in this Seminary. I cannot say exactly what I learned from them. Much of the good I got came through my admiration of them. I watched them closely. I observed their methods. They gave me ideals. They made me say

to myself—"That is the way I should like to do my work"—and, in a humble way, that was how in later years I tried to do it. I thank God that

"rigorous teachers seized my youth,  
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,  
Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,  
There bade me gaze, and there aspire."

There were great professors in this Seminary in those days, and there are great professors in this Seminary now. I am an old man now and it is too late for me to take up a new branch of study, but there are young men in this Faculty who, when I hear them talk upon the subjects to which they are devoting their lives, make me wish that I was young again that I might sit at their feet and take up these studies under their leadership.

There are many forms of professorial efficiency and there is a place in the theological seminary for different types of men; for men who give inspirational lectures and men who come to close quarters with their students in Socratic dialogue: for men who present truth in appetizing, didactic morsels, and men who steady us by their massive learning and judicial calmness: for men whose words are a clarion call to service and men who delight us with dialectical sword-play.

I hope, therefore, that the standard of the kindergarten and the primary school will never be made the canon by which we are to judge the master workmen of the academic world.

This Theological Seminary, as I have already said, is also a fortress. By this I mean, of course, that it is committed to the defense of Christianity as a supernatural religion. But I have already exceeded the time allotted to me and I can say only a word. When we affirm, however, that we are committed to the defense of a definite theological position we shall be exposed to criticism. "You claim," they will say, "to be searching for truth, but you are really defending a foregone conclusion." But does the defense of

a belief necessarily carry with it insincerity in the possession of a belief. Does it necessarily imply a lack of learning or of logic or of honesty on the part of those who hold the belief? I cannot see that it does. I have never heard the learning or the logical power of a great advocate disparaged simply on the ground that he held a brief for a foregone conclusion. I can well understand the position of those who say "We have here no continuing conviction but we seek one to come and we need all our learning and logical power in order that we may find it." Our position, I confess, is somewhat different from this. We are in possession of certain definite convictions which are exposed to <sup>hostile attack and our feeble efforts by various scholarships and</sup> most searching inquiry can be employed in no better way than in the defense of these convictions. Of course, if it is a fault to believe that Christianity contains a certain definite body of knowledge we admit that we are justly open to criticism, but I do not believe that to be ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth is a sign of theological supremacy. The greatest issue at the present time is that which deals with supernatural Christianity. The great battlefields of religion are those of philosophy and history. I know of no more important service that this Seminary can render than the defense of historic Christianity. Could men see this as I see it they would feel, I am sure, that the service which this Seminary has already rendered and that yet remains to be rendered by her Faculty is worth all that the Seminary has cost, even though a student had never darkened her doors. But that Princeton Seminary may do this work, as the men who are in her Faculty would like to have it done, she needs larger endowments. We are in need of the munitions of war and are looking to you, Dr. Stevenson, to do for Princeton what Lloyd George is doing for Great Britain in this regard. Princeton Seminary, in the Providence of God, is called to occupy a conspicuous place of honor in the defense of the faith once delivered to the saint. Will the Church enable her to meet the full measure of her responsibilities and take full advantage of her great opportunity?

May you have a long, happy and successful career, Mr. President, as the head of this institution and, under your guiding hand, may you see this seat of learning with an ever-increasing body of students, an enlarged curriculum and an adequate material equipment so far surpassing the glory of her former days that the friends and foes alike of historic Christianity, as they survey the great centers of theological learning and realize what this institution has done and will continue to do in defense of fundamental truth, may feel constrained to say—"There, there, in Princeton Theological Seminary, is to be seen the Gibraltar of the Christian faith."

*Bermuda.*

FRANCIS L. PATTON.

#### ERRATUM.

Insert between the lines 12 and 13, page 80, Vol. ~~XIX~~, No. 1. the following line :

hostile attack and we feel that the ripest scholarship and the