

FACULTY ISSUE



Columbia Theological Seminary Bulletin

COLUMBIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY BULLETIN

VOLUME 60

DECEMBER, 1967

No. 5

Published five times a year by Columbia Theological Seminary, Box 520, Decatur, Georgia 30031. Entered as second-class matter, May 9, 1928, at the Post Office at Decatur, Ga., under the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912. Second-class postage paid at Decatur, Georgia.

found in Proverbs 4:18 — “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” The other is from Ephesians 3:8 and I Corinthians 15:10. It consists of statements made by the Apostle Paul which Dr. Green had appropriated for himself, and which he echoed in his life: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach. . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ. . . . By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain.”

IN RESPONSE TO RECOGNITION BY THE ALUMNI

William Childs Robinson

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Pastor, Mr. President, Alumni, Family and Friends —

This is far beyond my fondest expectations. I am overcome. What can one say in appreciation of your manifold kindness? In listening to the gracious words of President Richards and of Dr. Phillips, I could not help but recall the old story that comes from the time when it was customary to eulogize the departed. The widow listened as the Parson waxed eloquent over the alleged virtues of her departed husband until she could stand it no longer. Pulling her son closer, she whispered to him, “Johnny, you go open that lid and see if the man in that box is your Pa.”

Yet Dostoevski does tell us, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, that, “in the heart of every man is both Sodom and the Madonna,” and the Apostle reminds us that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. Compared with the pricelessness of the divine treasure the earthiness of the human vessel overwhelms one.

Perhaps the generous gift of this magnificent automobile is a reminder of our first Christmas as professor at Columbia. That year we had been buying furniture and several times the car ran out of gas. So when Christmas came and the students took the faculty to task, they humorously complained that Dr. Robinson ran out of money by the middle of every month and the students had to push him around to the first. If our fourteen-year-old DeSoto has looked like it needed replacement, my defense is that this year we have been buying a house into which to move as we retire from the faculty home provided for us while we teach.

In any case I can only remember the Apostle’s lovely letter of thanks in his Epistle to the Philippians. Perhaps my Philippians are Harry and Davidson Phillips, the President and all those Columbia alumni and friends for whom they spoke. “I thank God for every remembrance of you from the first day until now” and, “my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” We cannot thank you enough.

Nor can I ever sufficiently express my gratitude to my junior colleagues for their kind offices in honoring my seventieth birthday with a volume of essays by distinguished scholars. *Soli Deo Gloria*, the title they have selected, is precious to every Christian’s heart. Abraham believed giving glory to God.

As spiritual heirs of the father of the faithful, we give to God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — all the glory of saving us sinners.

The President has kindly eased the large number of my years by placing his along with mine. But it would make him a bit too old to press this parallelism. True he entered Old Columbia as a student the year I did as a professor. But I entered as a student just fifty years ago this fall. And behind that were the years when I was a member of the Woodrow Memorial Church, named for a former professor of Columbia, and staffed most of its years by professors and students of the Seminary. Moreover, this congregation grew out of the Waverley Sunday School. Some sixty years ago a tall distinguished looking gentleman attended that Sunday School. The Secretary announced that the Superintendent, the Assistant Superintendent and the Secretary were all present. The dignified gentleman, Professor R. C. Reed, turned to my Father and asked, "Just who is the Superintendent of this Sunday School." "Why you are," answered the Assistant Superintendent. So from early years I have lived in the shadow of Columbia Theological Seminary. And through the kindness of the institution's president I own the unused part of a lot in Elmwood Cemetery in Columbia around which there is a small coping stone with the words COLUMBIA SEMINARY cut into it. So I hope, in due time, to sleep beneath the shade of Columbia.

Our first years in Decatur were precarious ones. The depression struck before we had our roots firmly planted. It was thought that four seminaries were more than the Church could support. One week there were reports that we were to be moved to Richmond, the next that we would go to Memphis to be merged there with Louisville and Austin, a third that we would simply be folded up. At his funeral, it was properly noted that Dr. J. B. Green declared his determination to stay here in Decatur. I expressed a like determination by sinking some anchor stones. At that time there were no sidewalks and the dirt stretch from the street curb to our front walk was a bit over ten feet. One day a wagon came by with several granite blocks from Stone Mountain. I bought them and got the driver to help me sink them, reaching from the curb to the walk as my anchor stones. When a sidewalk was finally laid along Columbia Drive the stones were no longer needed there, so I had them moved to the rear of the house where they serve as stepping stones from the back steps to the parking area. And they are still anchor stones . . . now attached to the stern as formerly they were to the prow of 511 Columbia Drive.

But some of you are asking, "What do you need with anchor rocks, aren't you an anchor yourself?" Years ago when I met Dr. Ernest Thompson, then Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Charleston, W. Va., and father of the distinguished professor who was leading the progressive forces of the Assembly, the good pastor remarked, "Well we must also have conservatives in the Church." May I indulge the hope that the liberals of our day will be as broad in their outlook as was Dr. Ernest Thompson and recognize that the conservatives also have a place in the Church.

Augustine declared that this was his faith because it was the catholic faith.¹ Then he advised the Augustinian reader not to love him more than the catholic faith, and warned his critic not to love himself more than the catholic truth. "To the one, I say be unwilling to yield to my writings as to

¹ Haec et mea fides est, quando haec est catholica fides, Augustine *De Trinitate*, I. IV 7.

the canonical Scriptures . . . Likewise I say to my critic: Be unwilling to change my writings by your own opinion on contention, but correct them only from the divine text or by unanswerable reason."²

Perhaps, we are not accustomed to phrase ourselves exactly as Augustine did. We are more likely to speak of the biblical revelation of God as it focuses upon Christ Jesus. For all the light of sacred story gathers around His head sublime — around the Head once crowned with thorns, and crowned with glory now. But we are dedicated to Augustine's position. We are opposed to heteronomy, that is, to the rule of ourselves or of other men. But we do not oppose heteronomy in the interest of autonomy. When every man does what is good in his own eyes, even though it be under the pleas of acting according to his own conscience, then we have anarchy. Reject the rule of any other man, but do it in the interest of Theonomy. Reject my authority in so far as my teaching differs from God's Word; hold to what I have taught in so far as it is His; and do so because it is His and mine only as I have all too faintly echoed His. John Robinson was right that God has more truth to break forth from His Word. This week's lectures are making that plain. Whether one be an old teacher, or a young lecturer may his words help you bring every thought into captivity to Christ. For He is the Word incarnate in a human life, the Heart of the Father made manifest in a historical involvement that issued in crucifixion and could be vindicated only by His Resurrection. We have one Lord, the crucified, risen, reigning, interceding Lord Jesus Christ.

² Verumtamen sicut lectorem meum nolo mihi esse deditum ita correctorem nolo sibi. Ille me non amet amplius quam catholicam fidem, iste se non amet amplius quam catholicam veritatem. Sicut illi dico, Noli meis litteris quasi Scripturis canonicis inservire . . . Ita illi dico: Noli meas litteras ex tua opinione vel contentione, sed ex divina lectione vel inconcussa ratione corrigere. Augustine *De Trinitate*, III, praef. 2.