

THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

VOLUME V

JULY 1907

NUMBER 3

AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY.

Augustine marks almost as great an epoch in the history of philosophy as in the history of theology. It was with him that the immediate assurance of consciousness first took its place as the source and warrant of truth. No doubt there had been a long preparation for the revolution which was wrought by his announcement of the principle of "self-assured subjectivity", as Windelband calls it, and his establishment of it in "the controlling central position of philosophic thought". But the whole preceding development will not account for the act of genius by which he actually shifted the basis of philosophy, and in so doing became "the true teacher of the middle ages", no doubt, but above and beyond that "one of the founders of modern thought".¹ He may himself be said to have come out of Plato, or Plotinus; but in even a truer sense out of him came Descartes and his successors.² When he urged men to cease seeking truth without them, and to turn within, since the home of truth

¹ Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, E. T., pp. 276, 264, 270.

² Leder, *Augustins Erkenntnistheorie*, p. 76: "If we must see in Plotinus the father of Augustine's Platonism, we may yet recognize it as an especially original service of the Church-Father, that he established over against all scepticism the first point of all certitude in self-consciousness. He found in Plotinus no guidance for this: rather by an act of genius he anticipated in it the line of thought which Descartes (1640) made in his *Meditationes* the starting point of his expositions."

resolve the doctrine into a "mere analysis of human experience". Prof. Brown sympathizes with those who have been "unwilling to stop with a Trinity of manifestation", because this seems to resolve the doctrine into a "mere analysis of human experience". He too shares "the same longing for communion with the living God". But in the recognition of the truth of the divine immanence, "the antithesis between the Trinity of essence and that of manifestation disappears". The meaning of all this seems to be that there is no "Trinity of essence", but that the term Trinity, nevertheless, expresses a real truth, *i. e.*, one ontologically grounded in God, viz., that he is a self-revealing and self-imparting God. This is simply the doctrine that the terms Word and Spirit are expressive of modes of God's relations *ad extra*. The modalistic conception of the Trinity did not stop with "mere human experience" any more than does Prof. Brown.

The doctrine of the Atonement set forth is the moral influence theory. For after following his usual method of indicating the elements of truth in all the other views, and after pointing out their defects, Prof. Brown says that the Atonement's "saving efficacy consists in its moral influence in arousing repentance and faith" (p. 365). Obviously that which has atoning value is man's repentance and faith. From this we would expect to find a doctrine of sin which would eliminate the ideas of guilt and penalty altogether. We are surprised, therefore, to find them retained and defined in a way which would seem to imply the governmental theory of the Atonement (pp. 285ff.). The subjects coming usually under the Application of Redemption and Eschatology are distributed under other heads, and receive a somewhat scanty treatment.

We believe that Prof. Brown has made an honest and exceedingly painstaking effort to state Christian doctrine in such a way as to do justice to the Christianity of the New Testament and to the statement of Christian doctrine wrought out by the Church of God under the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit. But any attempt to state Christianity in the terms of a philosophy which minimizes the supernatural is foredoomed to failure.

At the end of the volume will be found a classified bibliography. This, though not intended to be exhaustive, is nevertheless very full, and will be of great help to the student of theology.

Princeton.

C. W. HODGE.

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY.

GOD'S CHOICE OF MEN: A Study of Scripture. By WILLIAM R. RICHARDS, Pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church, New York City. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1905. 8vo., pp. 231.

The "provoking occasion" of this book, we are told, was a charge of hypocrisy made by the editor of a leading New York newspaper against

an alleged large number of Presbyterian ministers who "remain outwardly faithful to a creed" which they have "inwardly rejected"; who, more particularly, have become convinced that there is no such God as the "God of the Westminster Confession". Accordingly, in this series of sermons, published as the constituent chapters of the book, Dr. Richards essays to give us "a new-fashioned treatment of the old-fashioned doctrine of God's election of men". The material is divided, somewhat arbitrarily, into two parts, the first exhibiting a number of scriptural examples of God's choice of men and various examples of the human responses to this divine election", while the second half deals more narrowly with the "purpose of election, raising the inquiry what God chooses men for."

The sermons as a whole bear the well-known traits of Dr. Richards' pulpit work. They are simple, direct, incisive in style, practical and experimental rather than dogmatic in method, enlivened with many a fine fetch of fancy as well as with many a flash of subtle spiritual discernment, thoroughly biblical at the center, if not along the entire periphery, of their thought. The book is suggestive and stimulating; and in spite of an occasional thrust at the Westminster divines on the one hand, and the opponents of every sort of "election", on the other, there is an overplus of sweeter and stronger notes of religious sincerity and earnestness that give the pages a peaceful import and make them good devotional literature.

But we cannot help feeling that Dr. Richards would have rendered his apologetic service more successfully, if, before finding fault with the statement of our Confession on the subject of the divine decree, he had taken more pains to ascertain just what the much abused document teaches. We lack confidence in any guide who would introduce us to the intricacies of the theology of the Reformation, when we find him repeating the erroneous judgment that Calvin (*Institutio*, III, ch. iii, § 7) referred to the decree of reprobation as a "*decretum quidem horribile*". And our confidence is by no means strengthened when we are told (p. 7) that the "Reformation creeds might have left one to suppose that God sometimes elects His favorites to a sinecure"—an estate of grace, presumably, in which they have no duties or responsibilities. The fact is that Dr. Richards has reduced the teachings of Scripture on his theme to the one great principle that God elects men to service. So eager is the author to write this truth large upon his every page that although, according to his preannounced plan, he was reserving this aspect of the problem for the second part of the volume, he must needs make it the chief burden of the first half of the book also. Now assuredly this is a cardinal biblical truth: it cannot be too strongly put. But does Dr. Richards suppose this is a twentieth century discovery? Was not this the precise conviction of those imperturbable predestinarians of the 16th and 17th centuries whose achievements in behalf of religious and civil liberty we are here so often called upon to admire? And having this assurance of faith that steeled their hearts for heroic endurance, did the creed-makers forget to declare

themselves on this fundamental question? What sort of historical investigation is it that fails to find this "supreme saving truth" in the Westminster Confession, or indeed in any of the more elaborate Protestant symbols? How fully even Melancthon as early as 1530 apprehended the purpose of election may be seen in the Augsburg Confession, Art. xx, and how large Dr. Richards' thesis loomed up in the conception of the Westminster divines he might easily have ascertained by a perusal of the chapters on the divine decree, on sanctification, and on good works.

The truth is that Dr. Richards simply refuses to grapple with the problem of the divine election conceived *sub specie æternitatis*. The biblical examples of election are reduced to simple cases of providential calls in the temporal sphere. With what violence to the plain statements of Scripture this is sometimes accomplished may be seen, *e. g.*, in his sermon on the "election" of Jacob as against Esau, where, in spite of what Paul says about the pretemporal nature of this act of choice, the transaction is regarded simply as a sort of divine recognition of the wily Jacob's desire to have his brother's birthright: election on the basis of a divine foreknowledge; rather, indeed, as a reward of Jacob's meritorious faith! Similarly Jer. xviii. 6, "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel", is made to mean that we as Christians are called to liberty—an exegetical result that is true enough in the light of other declarations of Scripture, but which can be secured from this passage only in some such arbitrary manner as the author on his own confession has had to employ: "I cannot understand all that the apostle says about it in the ninth chapter of Romans, but it is evident (?) that the figure itself means freedom."

We admire the practical and helpful paragraphs in this book which, so far as they go, place clearly before us one of the most important, as well as one of the most attractive, features of Calvinism. But we are of the opinion that the apostle Paul, and the authors of the Westminster Confession after him, had a much richer conception of the sovereign will and purpose of God in the whole cosmos than Dr. Richards' restricted treatment of *God's Choice of Men* would lead one to suppose.

Philadelphia.

FREDERICK W. LOETSCHER.

CHRISTUS IST MEIN LEBEN. Akademische Predigten von Dr. H. Cremer, weil. Prof. d. Theol. in Greifswald. Herausgegeben von Lic. E. Cremer. Pfarrer in Rehme in Westfalen. Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann. 1906. Pp. 237.

These 27 sermons by the late Prof. Cremer, gathered and issued by his son, were preached to the students of the University of Greifswald. They set forth fully and clearly the way of life as it is in Christ Jesus. Because Germany has been the home of Rationalism, and because here and there a University professor makes himself conspicuous by doubting or denying the Truths of revelation, many have come to the conclusion that the entire German Protestant Church is permeated by unbelief.