

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## I. THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS.

**The Christian Faith; A System of Dogmatics.** By Theodore Haering. Translated from the second German edition, 1912, by John Dickie and George Ferries. Two volumes. George H. Doran Company, New York. Pp. 952. \$6.00 net.

To all who are not content religiously to live on their feelings alone, and to all moderns who are unable to live in the intellectual fogs and mists created by a false theological method these volumes will bring an inspiring message on the greatest of themes.

The first 314 pages deal with the fundamental questions of Apologetics. The approach to the subject is modern in the best sense of the word. That is, it recognizes the problems and seeks to meet the objections to Christianity raised by recent non-Christian thought.

As preliminary to the apologetic task the author defines the nature of religion in general, and then defines the Christian religion in its essential characteristics. In all religions there are four elements: 1. Belief in supernatural power or powers; 2. A sense of need; 3. Worship and trust; 4. Assurance on the part of the worshipper that his God or gods have revealed themselves. Communion and fellowship with God are primary elements. Psychologically religion includes not only the feeling but also the intellect and the will. In one sense feeling is primary since the religious act begins with a feeling of dependence and ends with the feeling of blessedness. But the cognitive and volitional elements also run through the entire process.

The chief marks of the Christian religion are the following: It is monotheistic, ethical, and redemptive. Christianity cannot be separated from its Founder. All enduring interpretations of Christianity must make consistent connection with the New Testament. Development on right lines in accordance with New Testament beginnings is right and proper, and indeed necessary. Every age presents new difficulties for faith and the Christian faith must be presented to meet each new situation.

The Kingdom of God is a leading conception of Christ's religion. To save the lost and to establish the Kingdom are essentially one and the same task. Jesus bears an incomparable relation to man as the revelation of God. No other founder of any religion bears any such relation to his religion.

Christianity requires proof. It is in this section that we find some of the most interesting discussions of the entire treatise. The author holds that as Christians we have real knowledge. Faith and knowledge are not to be regarded as antitheses or opposed to each other. Faith indeed gives rise to knowledge. Modern investigators in this realm have depended too exclusively upon the historical-psychological method. They have sought to state exhaustively the meaning of religion merely by means of study of consciousness, and by tracing the course of the history of religions. But this method never can get beyond or behind the phenomena of religion, its psychic factors. It cannot rise to the realm of causes.

The author discriminates scientific from religious knowledge. Scientific knowledge deals with the principle of causation and explains by means of it. Religion moves in the realm of persons. The "assent compelling" knowledge based on direct observation of objects in nature is not available in religion. Indeed such knowledge would be an injury not a help to religion. But religious knowledge is none the less real knowledge.

The old forms of the theistic proof do not really prove in the full sense. Indeed Christian and religious certainty does not come in this way. Its method is different. Christian knowledge arises through the revelation of God in Christ. That revelation is, as to its content, spiritual life, which finds utterance in clear thought. As to form it is supernatural, the mystery of God revealed. In value it is a genuine authority. But this authority is not legal.

The centre of the revelation and the crucial point in our experience is the personality of Jesus Christ the revealer of God. We know God through Jesus and only through Him. Jesus is the ground of our faith. Without him religious certainty is impossible, through the revelation of God in Christ man comes into real communion and fellowship with God, He is redeemed.

In his conception of the revelation of God in Christ, of the supreme place of Jesus in the Christian life and experience as the redeemer and revealer of God we find Haering's fundamental position. From this starting point he works out his doctrine of Scripture which is a suggestive discussion of the evangelical conception of Scripture. From this central point of view he works out his doctrine of God the Father who is personal, gracious and self-revealing, actuated in all things by holy love. The whole system indeed turns on the knowledge we obtain through the revelation of God in Christ. That revelation is indeed objective but in deepest harmony with our inmost spiritual life and promotive in the highest degree of spiritual freedom and fellowship with God. Dogmatics is not limited merely to a study of the psychology of Christian experience but it derives its sense of reality and vital power through the inner experience of God as revealed in Christ. In one crucial point, that regarding the pre-existence of Christ, the author sums up for those who accept the pre-existence idea by saying that in Christ they see the bestowal of God's love "only in the sense of ideal pre-existence, not only on Him as the correlative in the world's history of the eternal love of God, but also, apart from His earthly existence, as the love of the Father to the Son in the mystery of the eternal life of God, and therefore, as no other word is available for us, in a state of real pre-existence," (p. 704).

Of course one finds in a work so extensive as this, points of view which one may not accept. But it is a rare thing to find a theology so loyal to Jesus Christ and the Gospel combined with so fine an insight and so adequate grasp upon modern issues and controversies. Professor Haering's great work is a very clear and definite refutation of the statement, sometimes made, that no great constructive thinking is being done in the realm of theology. Professor Haering moves with a firm tread in all departments of his subject. It is a book which every thoughtful pastor who is willing to labor a little with long, though not obscure, sentences, should possess. It is a discussion which all scholars will reckon with in their researches in theology.

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