

[The Presbyterian Oct 17, 1929]

**The Glory of the Cross.** By Samuel Zwemer. Marshall Brothers. London; 3/6.

This book contains ten meditations, or short discourses, on subjects drawn from Passion Week, or pertaining to the death of Christ.

Dr. Zwemer is known as an editor and a missionary, but Christendom may well recognize him as one of its fine scholars with a thinking capacity of the first order. The book in question gives evidence of his caliber. Ministers will find this series of meditations helpful in any series of services in holy week.

D. S. C.

**The Philosophy of Religion.** By Edward E. Richardson. M.S., M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy in the George Washington University. The Judson Press; \$1.50.

Perhaps a better title would be: The Philosophy of Religions. The sub-title is The Principles of Christianity and Other-Religions, which better expresses the contents.

This book is one of the heavy weights. It will not be read for pastime on a summer afternoon. The discussion of the Trinity is a piece of closely knit reasoning, and it is gratifying to know that the most abstruse doctrines of Christianity are vindicated at the bar of the highest intellectualism.

If a theological criticism could be made it might be in regard to the doctrine of the generation of the Son. Yet we hesitate to criticize, feeling that perhaps Dr. Richardson did not mean quite what his language seems to express. Dr. Richardson is such a scholar, and so true to revealed truth that we give him the benefit of the doubt, and prefer to think that we may not have caught his meaning exactly.

His discussion of Brahmanism is so excellent and discriminating that we could wish for it a wide reading on the part of scholarly men. The same may be said as to Buddhism. Students of Comparative Religion would do well to read this book.

The section devoted to the philosophy of the Bible, he shows the rational consistency of the Bible, its harmony with metaphysical principles, evincing the accuracy and profundity of Biblical thought. As to philosophy *per se*, his brief reference to Berkeley and Hegel seem to place them in a better light than we are disposed to concede. It ought to be settled once and forever in all philosophy that real and unreal pertain to the existence, and not to importance or value. To say that the spiritual is more real than the material is not true. The material is just as real as the spiritual, though less important.

Greek philosophy comes in for a share of consideration in its efforts to reach the Ultimate. In this the author shows a wonderful familiarity with, and grasp of, a difficult subject, as he compares or contrasts the conclusions of Greek thought with the Christian conception of God.

The last chapter is on freedom and authority in religion. In a day when all external authority in religion is denied, a thorough discussion of this subject is welcome. Here we could wish that the author had been a little more explicit in the distinction between religious and ecclesiastical authority. It is the former that is chiefly debated to-day. We present what we think is the author's position. "Religion is the establishing of a beneficial relation between man and an infinite being. If this definition be accepted, it aids in dealing with the problem of freedom in connection with authority." It is certain that our relation to an infinite being prepares the way for his authority over us. "To regard restraint as merely an externally imposed barrier is to mistake its true character. Whatever is obeyed makes us seemingly subservient to that authority. But authority may be reasonable. It may be for our advantage and in accord with what unprejudiced reason shows is for our good. The compelled submission of a child to parental authority appears at the time a grievous thing. In after years the man now affirms that the authority that directed his course was desirable. Authority may be seen to be reasonable when its setting is appreciated." "The only perfect law of liberty is found in strictly divine authority. Here authority and freedom meet."

"Knowledge that is revealed must be stated in such a way that it is not to be re-stated by any one who so desires. This would take away its transcendent character and make it merely the opinion of an individual. Religious truth is authoritative in that no individual or group of individuals can disannul or add to this which has been supersensuously revealed. To admit this would mean that religion is placed on the same ground as philosophy and science, whose subject matter is in constant state of revision. This would make religious belief confusing, and settled procedure would be impossible. The revelation of the Infinite could not change, except to give more completeness to the revelation. To maintain that what was revealed as to the intrinsic principles of religion was afterward to be abrogated and denied, would mean an inconsistent Infinite.

All this goes to show the absolute authority of revelation. When men repudiate all external authority in religion, they have first repudiated the revelation of God and have reduced God himself to a pantheistic immanence.

We are glad, by means of this book, to make the acquaintance of Dr. Richardson and to add another star to our galaxy of competent scholars.

David S. Clark