Issued Twice a Week—Tuesday and Friday

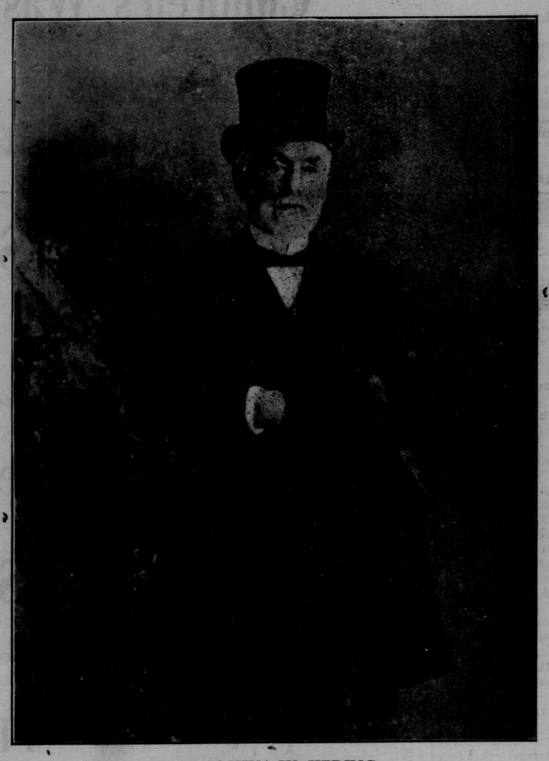
AMERICAN SENTINEL.

$1.00 PER ANNUM. WESTMINSTER, MD., TUESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 11, 1912. VOL. 81—NO. 29

42nd Commencement Of Western Md. College

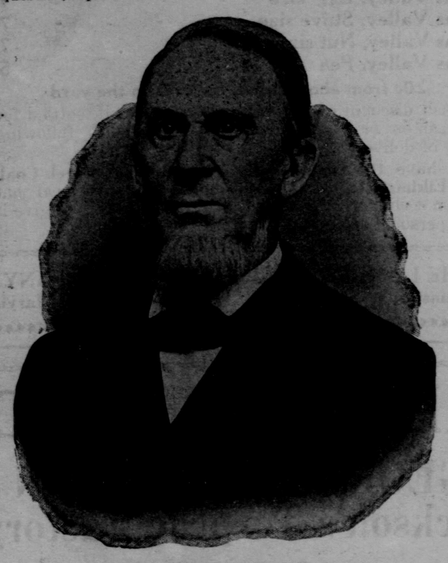


Main Building of the College



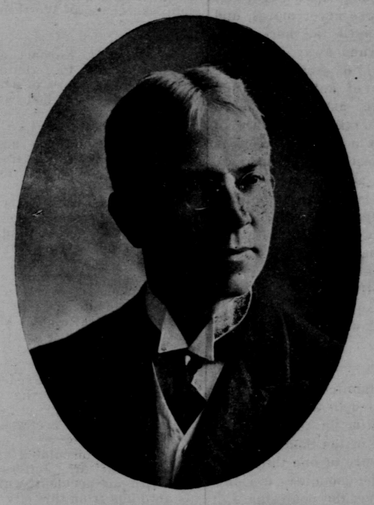
DR. JOSHUA W. HERING

the president of the Board of Trustees, who has been a valuable friend of the college from its infancy.



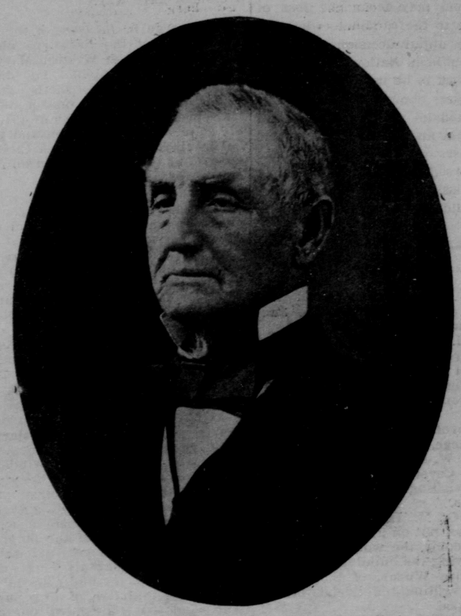
THE LATE DR. J. T. WARD

the first president of the college, whose memory is revered by all of the early students.



PROF. WM. R. McDANIEL

the popular and effecient vice-president of the Faculty.



THE LATE JOHN SMITH OF WAKEFIELD

a consistent friend of the college in its early struggles.

and the scribes with the elders and Jesus during the days immediately after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem and, immediately before His crucifixion. It was the time, therefore, when Jesus, if He had any reasons to offer, any explanations to make, any justification of His course to present, would have been most likely to open His mind freely to all inquirers. The people who came to Him in this interview were not friends, to be sure, and their real intention in asking Him to tell them by what authority He was acting, was doubtless hostile. Instead of sincerely desiring to weigh fairly the claims of Jesus they hoped to embarrass Him with the difficult if not impossible task of demonstrating that He was acting under divine authority. But they appear in the guise of friends not disciples, but ready to become such if He could furnish sufficient reasons for their allegiance. It seems as if they came with open mind, not yet convinced, but not hardened into determined opposition either; and now if Jesus would present His case fully and convincingly they would consider it judicially and decide it upon its merits.

Jesus meets this advance with a counter question, upon their answer

e still the only answer Jesus has for riend or foe, "Neither tell I you by hat authority I do these things."

Now is this a question we may ask? lay we properly try to discover the oundation of the authority of Jesus? r does He mean to treat this quesion from every one as one we have o right to ask? I do not think this an be the true account of the matter. Neither do I think that He purosely asked the scribes a question hich He knew they would be afraid o answer because they asked Him question which He did not wish to nswer. He did put them to rout in he logical battle; but I am persuaded there is a far deeper reason in his refusal of His, and I am concerned to find out what that is.

1. Let us start with this statement, hat as a matter of fact the authority of Jesus is actually felt in the world. he scribes did not venture to disbute the patent fact after the outbreak of the multitude on Palm Sunday. And our generation raises no question of the fact to-day. Jesus is the supreme authority to which the highest type of civilized men refer all the greatest questions of mind and heart. He is a recognized force in the world of action and thought and sentiment to a degree that makes it absurd to compare Him with any other; His authority is assumed in all discussions of moral conduct, and His decisions are felt to be final. Of course there are, as there always have been, those who resent this assumption. Sometimes they are unconsciously led by the innate opposition of their heart to goodness, sometimes desperately arrayed against all authority with vicious intensity, and sometimes they are simply critical, viewing everything in the light of the understanding, and impatient of whatever is asked of them beyond the province where the cold test of reason may be applied. It seems a hard saying that to both these classes alike, the resentful, selfish evil-doer, and the critical but loyal disciple of the intellect, Jesus should have but one reply to their queries, "Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

We who spend our time and strength in promoting intellectual activity should be the last to depreciate criticism, or to condem the state of mind which is never satisfied with anything less than certainty in matters of great moment. We must know the truth, for it is truth alone that can make us free. Yet the disciple of Jesus knows that there is no place for criticism in the matter of the authority of Jesus. Criticism is simply unable to get at the secret of Jesus. Jesus will not argue with men; neither will He denounce the critic. He has nothing to say to him. If we persist in demanding an intellectual demonstration of the validity of the authority of Jesus we must in the end go sorrowfully away without it. There is the great fact of the authority in the world which we cannot ignore; and if we refuse to accept it until our mind has been satisfied with an explanation of it, we will in the end be left with only a sad mystery which can bring us no comfort but which cannot be argued away. Jesus is a fact, and His authority is a fact, but whence it is and why it is, Jesus refuses to tell us. Critical resentment and critical inquiry differ greatly in their impulse, but they are alike in their importance to get an answer from Jesus.

2. Let us turn to another and a very different class whom we may call collectively, reverent Bible readers. They believe in and joyfully accept the authority of Jesus, and when they would know where that authority is to be found they think instantly of the Bible, God's Word, Jesus' credential, the very testimony of the Holy Spirit to the divine wisdom and power of Jesus. Now we must be very careful what we say here lest we be fatally misunderstood. No greater calamity could overtake any of us, but especially the young, than to lose faith in the Bible, to have doubt of its inevitableness. Yet we shall do the Bible harm by claiming for it what it does not claim for itself; and we shall do ourselves infinite harm by expecting from it what it was never intended to give us. Let us then put this frank question: Suppose we can find in the Bible the positive, unambiguous statement that Jesus is the Son of God in the same sense that God is God; and that His word is to be accepted as the final word for all men. Does that absolutely settle the matter of the authority of Jesus? Consider a moment. You accept Jesus as authority, and when asked why, you say the Bible says so. Is that a sufficient answer? Is not that after all a secondary guarantee? Can what is written in a book finally settle a fact? Is that the sort of answer you expect for your scientific conclusions? No, we could never be satisfied if that were all. Even the Book of books does not make truth. What is in the Bible is there because it is true, not true because it is there. Was not Jesus speaking to Bible readers, the most diligent perhaps the world has ever seen, when He said "ye search the Scriptures because that in them ye think ye have eternal life. "Why then, if the Bible is sufficient did Jesus add the reproof: "And ye will not come unto me that ye may have life."?

The critical examination of the Bible in recent years has evolved many doubters and some skeptics. And many good people have feared that upon the results of this examination depends the validity of the claims of Jesus. But it is by no means true. If the Bible by any conceivable process of criticism could be eliminated from our thought we should still have Jesus with the same divine claim and with the same divine credential. He was the Christ before the New Testament was written, and He makes clear His claim independently of all the Gospels. We who worship Him as the Son of God are not worshipping the product of a book. He is His own credential and His authority prevails by its own inherent witness.

3. I am trying to reach my conclusion by a process of elimination, and I must next discuss the miracles as establishing the authority of Jesus. This line of argument is so old that doubtless it has already appeared to you strange that I did not at once present this as a sufficient answer to all questioning. I must admit, however, that I feel there is much to be feared in the argument from miracle strong as I believe it to be for other purposes, when it is used to establish the authority of the miracle worker. Power in itself establishes a very crude sort of authority. Those who are stronger than we in one realm may not be as strong in another. And there is in the human mind an indisposition to accept any authority that bases itself purely on force. We may have to submit, but we nevertheless refuse to yield our inmost sanction to it. The power that overcomes us physically leaves us still with the independent mind, and the unconquerable will.

But did not Jesus refer to His Miracle as the proof of His authority? Is it not recorded that a ruler of the Jews bore this unequivocal testimony: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest except God be with him"? And did not Jesus himself appeal to these when he said, "the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."? And when He healed the man sick of the palsy was it not, as He said, "that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins"?

These and many other quotations might be made bearing upon the same point, and we have grown accustomed to that manner of proof until it seems necessary for us to connect the authority of Jesus with his power to work miracles. And our notion is that the satisfactory and convincing answer to the scribes would have been simply to work a miracle. I think this was also in the mind of the scribes. But Jesus refused to gratify their expectation. It is certain to my mind that He will still refuse to give to those who trust in miracles any further answer or any demonstration of His authority. Miracles had a very important purpose to serve, and they still have, but it is a mistake to base our whole belief in Jesus upon this power. Jesus wrought miracles to prove that God had sent Him into the world, to prove that He had more than human power. This power was intended to awaken men to listen to Him to break up the crust of daily life and give men a glimpse of another world, to give Jesus a chance to tell His message and make known His real mission.

But miracles can never prove his authority came, because they were spiritually incapable of understanding His answer. They were looking for a King whose work and whose glory consisted in externals. Of course they could not think of any other demonstration of the authority of such a king than the external and material. But the kingdom of Jesus being spiritual, He could not translate its authority in material terms, and He could not make it manifest to those who lacked the spiritual capacity. St. John explains this difficulty in detail in his report of a conversation between Jesus and certain Jews who came to Him and said, "How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us palinly Jesus answered them "I told you and ye believe not. The works that I do in my Father's name these bear witness of me. But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follew me." This makes plain the use of miracles, and points out the only way of verifying the authority of Jesus. You must have spiritual kinship with Him, must be of His sheep, so that you can hear His voice. They who have not this cannot be told they cannot hear, neither understand. "They seek a sign and no sign can be given them." Now since the great work of Jesus in this world was to revive this spiritual faculty in men, to give them eternal life, as He phrases it so often, in this life and not in some future; to open up a way for communication between God and man, it is clear that no man could expect to know anything of the authority of such a worker until he submitted himself to the operation. We may receive testimony to His power, His goodness, His wisdom; but we can never know His authority until we enter into relation with Him. To teach a blind man optics you must first of all open his eyes, to teach a deaf man music you must first open his ears. The first essential is the faculty. And it is so with what Jesus undertakes. He is not here to break down governments, to shake the world with the thunder of His power, to flash terror from the skies or demand obedience to His commands. Nothing of this sort. He is here to show men the way to God. And the first thing is to create a faculty for perceiving God. Can He do this? Has he authority to do this? Has God indeed sent Him to do this? How can we tell until we first get the faculty and see for ourselves His authority? Then we know for ourselves and not because of the word of another that He is indeed the Christ. In other words, His authority issues from His work.

2. I do not want this discourse to seem metaphysical, and I realize that I have not yet reached what you would call a practical answer to the question raised in the beginning as to why Jesus refused to answer the scribes. I propose now to suggest that the authority of Jesus is demonstrated to His followers and to no one else for the reason just given, in an automatic way by practicing the method and learning the secret of Jesus.

The method of Jesus may be expressed in one word, renunciation. He declared He came to do not His own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him. He likened Himself to a corn of wheat which only fulfilled its mission by falling into the ground and dying. His complete success in attracting men was to be attained by being lifted to an ignominious cross. And He announced in the broadest terms the one absolute rule of life for all, "He that will save his life shall lose it; and he that will lose his life shall find it".

You understand perfectly what this method means; nothing can be simpler to understand, however difficult it is to practice. What do you think of its appeal? Does it convince you in the same way that a problem in mathematics demonstrates itself? On the contrary do not the majority of men pass by without giving it a serious thought? Yet nothing is more certain than that Jesus absolutely limits the explanation of His authority to those who practice His method. The critic may argue and deride, but there is no answer for him. Jesus is silent before all the tribunals of human judgments, and He speaks only to those who hear His voice. That I have already explained. But what remains to say is that to those who practice His method, the authority of Jesus demonstrates itself. It is automatic. The man who follows this method of life discovers that Jesus was not only right, but divine. He not only has life: He is life, the very power of life.

It is the same with the secret of Jesus. The reward He promised His followers was so remote from all their conceptions that it filled them with astonishment. They were not promised success, glory, or victory; but peace. They were to baffle the fiercest persecution of the world by a peace that the world could not take away. They were to find supreme satisfaction, not by means of external additions to their work or their lot. They were to know that they were living

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