

University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center

Guide to the George Burman Foster Papers 1897-1917



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.FOSTER
Title	Foster, George Burman. Papers
Date	1897-1917
Size	4 linear feet (8 boxes)
Repository	1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637

Abstract George Burman Foster was one of the most influential American theological writers of his time. Because of his liberal interpretation of the Bible, Foster was also the subject of much controversy. The George Burman Foster papers consist of 3.5 linear feet of material and cover the period from the late 1890's to 1917. The papers include course notes from Foster's classes as well as sermons and lectures by Foster. The collection also contains an early version of Foster's manuscript, "The Finality of the Christian Religion."

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection the preferred citation is:

Foster, George Burman. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

George Burman Foster was born on April 2, 1858, in Alderson, West Virginia, to Oliver Harrison Foster and Helen Louise Skaggs. He studied at Shelton College from 1876-1879 and received his B.A. from West Virginia University in 1883. In 1879, he was ordained to the Baptist ministry, and in 1883-1884 he was pastor at Morgantown, Pennsylvania. Foster married Mary Lyon, daughter of Professor Franklin Lyon of West Virginia University, on August 4, 1884.

After completing his theological training at Rochester Theological Seminary, where he graduated in 1887, Foster served as pastor in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., from 1887 to 1891. Essentially of scholarly rather than a ministerial disposition, Foster resigned his pastorate in the latter year in order to carry on theological studies in Germany. From 1891 to 1892 he spent most his time

in the universities of Gottingen and Berlin. Shortly after Foster's return he was granted a Ph.D. from Denison University.

The rest of Foster's career was devoted to teaching and writing. He was professor of philosophy at McMaster University, Toronto, Canada, from 1892 to 1895; associate professor and professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Chicago from 1895-1905; and professor of philosophy of religion at the University of Chicago from 1905 until his death on December 22, 1918.

George Burman Foster was one of the most influential American theological writers of his time. Because of his liberal interpretation of the Bible, Foster was also the subject of much controversy. He was a powerful force for the liberalizing of orthodox Christianity. For this reason he was bitterly attacked in 1909 by the Rev. Johnston Myers, fundamentalist pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church in Chicago. Delighting in debate, Foster sought rather than shunned controversy. In 1917 and 1918 wide attention was given to his public debates with Clarence Darrow on the subjects "Is Life Worth Living?" and "Resolved: That the Human Will is Free."

Foster battled consistently against authority and tradition and rejected the rationalistic arguments for religion, but defended eloquently the personal faith of the heart. Religion he regarded as something experimental, growing or declining with the age, but essential to man's nature, and in form, completely expressed in the life and legend of Christ.

Foster's writings include: *The Finality of the Christian Religion* (1906); *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence* (1909); *The Function of Death in Human Experience* (1915); "The Contribution of Critical Scholarship to Ministerial Efficiency," in G.B. Smith, *Guide to the Study of the Christian Religion* (1916); and *Christianity in its Modern Expression* (1921).

Scope Note

The George Burman Foster papers consist of 3.5 linear feet of material and cover the period from the late 1890's to 1917. The papers include course notes from Foster's classes as well as sermons and lectures written by Foster. The collection also contains an early version of Foster's manuscript, "The Finality of the Christian Religion." There are several manuscripts and what appear to be course notes with no identification.

The collection has been arranged into five series: (1) Notes by George B. Foster, (2) Notes by Dr. A.E. Haydon, (3) Notes by D.C. Macintosh, (4) Sermons, Lectures, and Manuscripts, and (5) Articles by Others.

Series I contains course notes of George Burman Foster from the late 1890's to 1909. He was a professor of systematic theology and philosophy of religion during his career at the University of Chicago. Series II and Series III contain notes of George Foster's courses taken by Dr. A. E. Haydon and D.C. Macintosh. Series IV contains original sermons and lectures by George Foster as well as several manuscripts. Finally, Series V contains articles by H.W. Stuart, Hiram Van Kirk, Earl M. Wilbur, and A.C. Watson.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Special Collections Research Center:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

University of Chicago. Office of the President. Harper, Judson and Burton Administrations. Records

Chicago Baptist Association. Records

William Rainey Harper. Papers

University of Chicago. Divinity School. Records

Subject Headings

- Foster, George Burman, 1858-1918
- Haydon, Albert Eustace
- Macintosh, Douglas Clyde
- University of Chicago. Dept. of Systematic Theology
- University of Chicago. Dept. of Comparative Religion
- University of Chicago. Divinity School

INVENTORY

Series I: Notes by George B. Foster

Box 1

Folder 1

"Primitive Religion" (Volume 1)

Box 1

Folder 2

"Primitive Religion" (Volume 2)

Box 1

Folder 3

"Ellswood's Prin. of Soc."

Box 1

Folder 4

"Kant's Theory of Religion", 1899

Box 2

Folder 1

"Kant's Philosophy of Religion" and "Hegel"

Box 2

Folder 2

"Theological Encyclopaedia and Methodology", 1897

Box 2

Folder 3

"Dogmatik"

Box 2

Folder 4

"Dogmatik, " loose pages from notebook

Box 2

Folder 5

"The Finality of the Christian Religion", Volume 1, 1899

Box 2

Folder 6

"The Finality of the Christian Religion", Volume 2, 1899

Box 3

Folder 1

"The Finality of the Christian Religion", Volume 3, 1899

Box 3

Folder 2-5

Unidentified notebook, 1890s-1905

Series II: Notes by Dr. Albert Eustace Haydon

Box 4

Folder 1

Course notes of G.B. Foster, "Epistemology of Religion, " spring, 1917

Series III: Notes by Douglas Clyde Macintosh

Box 4

Folder 2

"The Psychology of Faith, " autumn, 1904

Box 4

Folder 3

"The Philosophy of Religion, " autumn, 1904

Box 4

Folder 4

"The Philosophy of Religion, " n.d.

Box 4

Folder 5

"Apologetics I, " n.d.

Box 4

Folder 6

"Natural Theology, " n.d.

Series IV: Sermons, Lectures and Manuscripts

Box 4

Folder 7

Sermon notes concerning the finality of Jesus, September 19, 1909

Box 4

Folder 8

"The God Faith"; "All Men Created Equal"; "And Israel Saw the Egyptians Dead upon the Seashore"; "Religious Symbolism"; "Faith"

Box 4

Folder 9

"The Battle of Life"; "The Old and the New"; "The New Individualism"; "The Brother"; "Man and Super Man"; "Prayer"; "Morality in the Making"; "Two Talents"; "Doubting Thomas"; "Tradition or God?"; "Wisdom"; "God and War"

Box 4

Folder 10

"The Chief Good"; "Fellow Helpers of the Truth"; "Worship in the Service of Man and Nurture of Personality"; "Balak"; "The Bible"; "The Sacrifices of God"; "The Necessity of the Cross"; "Idealism"

Box 5

Folder 1

"I, Peter 2:11 - 25"; "The Importance of Holy Scripture for Dogmatic Theology"; "Industrial Justice"; "Religion and Ecclesiasticism"; "The Relation of the Modern Man to Socialism"; "Evolution and Religion"; "I am of Christ"; "The Seeming Triviality of Man"; "Our Daily Bread"

Box 5

Folder 2

"The Dialectic of the Religious Process"; "Life of the Human Spirit"; "Humanity"; "A Child's Religion"; "Erroneous Notions of Prayer"; "The Self and the Outside World"; "The Vital Function of the Church"; "Public Opinion"; "Then Cometh the End"; "The Shepherd's Friends"

Box 5

Folder 3

"Then He That Received the One Talent Came"; "The Holy Spirit"; "New Year's Experiences"; "The Religious Outlook"; "The Christian Religion as a Memory"; "Christianity"; "Words and Spirit of Jesus"; "The Christian Religion as Present Experience"

Box 5

Folder 4

"Paul's Resurrection"; "Religion of Islam"; "Other Gods and Demons"; "The Iranian Religion"; "The Possibility and the Right of Scientific Theology"; "Are Modern Men Religiously Different?"; "The Brother"; "The Marks of the Lord Jesus"

Box 5

Folder 5

The Place of the Resurrection of Christ in the Religion of the Future"

Box 5

Folder 6

"Free People"; "The Insufficiency of the Present World"; "God and Mammon"; "The Inner Life and the Outer World"; "Do No Injury"; "Religious Freedom"

Box 5

Folder 7

"The Relation of Theology to Science and Faith"; "Religion and Historic Faith";
"Background and Foreground"; "Optimism and Pessimism"; "Past and Future"; "The Law
of Adaptation"

Box 5

Folder 8

"The Lonliness of Man"; "The Faithfulness of God"; "Religious Freedom"; "The New
Religious Communism"; "Cure for Care"

Box 6

Folder 1

"The Imperishability of Religion"; "The New God"; "Origin of Abstract Ideas"; "Fathers
and Sons"; "The Light of the Soul"

Box 6

Folder 2

"Socialism and Religion"

Box 6

Folder 3

"Seekers After God" circa 1917; "The Price of Progress" (after April 15, 1912); "What
Constitutes Scripturalness?"; "The Old Faith and the New" -July 27, 1902; "Success
and Failure" - May 9, 1909; "What is Religious Faith?" "The Alabster Cruise"; "Public
Opinion and Personality"

Box 6

Folder 4

"Dogma and Freedom"; "Paulinism"; "Paul's Theology"; "The Finality of Jesus"; "The
New Loyalty"; "Thought and Symbol"

Box 6

Folder 5

"Finality of Christian Religion"; "Prolegomena"

Box 7

Folder 1

Pre - Pauline Messianism, " Chapter X

Box 7

Folder 2

Jesus (supplement), " Chapter X, typescript

Box 7

Folder 3

"The Essence of the Christian Religion - The Messianic Cult, " Chapter XI, manuscript

Box 7

Folder 4

The Messianic Cult, " Chapter XI, typescript

Box 7

Folder 5

"Christian Dogmatics, " manuscript, pp. 1 - 44

Box 7

Folder 6

"Christian Dogmatics, " manuscript, pp. 45 - 104

Box 7

Folder 7

"Christian Dogmatics, " manuscript, pp. 105 - 159

Box 7

Folder 8

"Christian Dogmatics, " manuscript, pp. 160 - 255

Box 7

Folder 9

Unidentified notes

Box 7

Folder 10-11

Unidentified, partial manuscript and typescript, pp. 1-225

Box 8

Folder 1

Unidentified manuscript

Box 8

Folder 2

Unidentified manuscript

Box 8

Folder 3

Unidentified typescript

Box 8

Folder 4

Unidentified typescript

Box 8

Folder 5-7

Unidentified notes

Series V: Articles by Others

Box 8

Folder 8

"Naturalistic and Religious Views of the World", H.W. Stuart, 1908

Box 8

Folder 9

Hiram Van Kirk, "The Growth of Authority Religion, "October 25, 1907; Earl M. Wilbur, "Discussion of Professor George B. Foster's 'Finality of the Christian Religion.' Chapter III on 'Dissolution of Authority - Religion'"; A.C. Watson, "The Fate of 'God'"

Box 8

Folder 10

Appreciations of George Burman Foster