

## THE RISE AND PRESENT POSITION OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

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Biblical Theology may be defined as that branch of theological science which undertakes a historical presentation of the religious teachings contained in the Scriptures. Its method is genetic, historical, and is therefore to be contrasted with Systematic Theology, not only in its more restricted field, but also in the method of its investigation. It is the task of Systematic Theology to construct a well-ordered system of divine truth, calling to its aid not Biblical materials only, but all that nature, science, philosophy, human conscience and experience, as well as religious history, can contribute; in short, everything from every source that may help to better knowledge of God and his ways with man. Biblical Theology, however, deals with the teachings of Scripture. It does not raise the question of their truthfulness. It does not attempt to square them with experience, or philosophy, or primarily even with themselves. Its peculiar task is to study the books of the Bible and to tell in orderly fashion what are the teachings to be found there. The Scriptures themselves are no more a system of truth than a bouquet of flowers is botany, or a heavenly constellation astronomy. The Bible will always be the very richest of sources from which the reverent Christian theologian will draw his materials, but it was never intended to be a systematic treatise upon things divine.

Biblical Theology is to be distinguished from Dogmatics in that the latter includes within its scope such theological teachings as have become the crystalized beliefs of later Christianity, the pronouncements of churches, councils and creeds. The Dogmatic Theologian has been compelled to consider problems which had not and could not have arisen in

days of prophets and apostles, and to construct his system amid situations that grew out of pressing conditions, burning controversies, cumulative experiences—all of which were bound to put a new face upon religious teaching—as the Holy Spirit has been saying many things which not even those nearest the Master were at first able to bear.

Thus it will be seen that, with the exception of Social Ethics, Comparative Religion and Missions and Sunday School Pedagogy, Biblical Theology may be reckoned the youngest of the studies now recognized as parts of theological discipline.

The wealth of possibility which this study opened up was most engaging; for all other streams of Biblical research pour their riches into this one. As the very crown of Biblical study, it draws upon Biblical Introduction; Biblical Philology and Exegesis; Biblical Criticism, both textual and historical; Biblical History and Archaeology—each and all being necessary to the best progress of Biblical Theology.

In turn, it gives back its wealth to the enrichment of all theological studies. As Dr. Schultz, in his masterful work on Old Testament Theology, says: “Biblical Theology is as it were the heart of theological science; which by working upon the original sources, gathers life blood into one great center, in order to pour it back again into the veins, so that the theological life of the existing church may be kept healthy and strong”. It is proper first to point out some of the chief forces which gave Biblical Theology birth; and then those which have later helped to shape the course of its development. In this way both its method and its mission to the world of Biblical scholarship may be better understood.

From the earliest days theologians have at least professed to keep well in touch with the sacred writings. The apostles and early Christians searched the Scriptures and appealed to them for confirmation of their preaching; but the disciples were so busy living their religion they had little inclination to investigate the Bible minutely to classify its phenomena.

Soon theologians began to spring up; but their faulty exegesis, their quaint and ingenious allegorizing, though not al-

ways noxious, became rank and luxuriant; their own fancies were read into the Scriptures, rather than the mind of the Spirit out of them. Many of those expounders did not ask what the writers say, but what they might have said had their minds been as fertile and as fantastic as their interpreters'. Instead of the real fruit such theologians brought nothing but leaves. Plainly the day for Biblical Theology was not yet.

With the rise of the papacy, and throughout the Middle Ages, theologians were so absorbed with what the fathers had said, and the saints had suffered, that there was little time for a first-hand, thorough study of the Scriptures. They for the most part had learned little Greek and less Hebrew. Nor had they forgotten the untamed art of allegorizing. Without historical perspective and sound exegesis there can of course be no Biblical Theology. Besides, when men simply took it for granted that the teachings of the church and the teachings of the Bible were identical—for did not the church say so?—when men took it for granted that the confessions and the Bible were in perfect accord—for did not the confessions say so?—there could be no demand for the study of the theology of the Bible. Biblical Theology may be said in a large sense to be a child of the Reformation.

Let us put ourselves back in those days of reform, with its demand for reliance upon the Bible as sufficient guide to faith, and its plea for the right of private judgment. Now, these two pregnant doctrines of Protestantism, with all their value, were quite certain (as indeed thoughtful Romanists predicted) to give birth to a new brood of theological extravagances. The right of private judgment might easily issue in a judgment of the reason, pure and simple, and so lead to rationalism; or the right of private judgment might be altogether a judgment of feelings, and so end in mysticism. Protestantism, to save itself from the fogs of the one and the rocks of the other, beat a retreat from its formal principle (which constitutes the Bible as sole authority) by beginning to formulate authoritative credal standards. These were private judgment, with a string attached. Thus did Protestantism early begin partially to undo itself. To these aberrations from pure Protestantism

was added the fact that an unduly large amount of scholastic and ecclesiastical luggage had been brought over by the Reformers from their early Roman habitat. So that while the Reformation carried within its bosom the principle of a truly Biblical Theology—its representatives boldly declaring that “the creeds should be interpreted by the Scriptures and not the Scriptures by the creeds”—yet the atmosphere had become surcharged with polemics; men were still under bondage to pronouncements of councils and synods, to traditional views and ecclesiastical dogmas. Hence the Protestant cry, “What does the Bible teach?” became in the mouth of the prevalent scholasticism, “What *ought* the Bible to teach?” Doctrinal disputes biased the mind; and men, having made their creeds, went to the Bible to seek confirmation of their own opinions, and of course brought back from the quest just what they sought. For—

“This is the Book where each his dogma seeks,  
And this is the Book where each his dogma finds.”

It was not till the eighteenth century that a different attitude and method began the work of emancipation. Haymann is said to be the first to use the term Biblical Theology. But his work was really, after all, Biblical Dogmatics. The new era came not from a son of Sarah, but from the camp of the Ishmaelite—those sons of Hagar of the Reformation, the Rationalists. In order to lay hands against the current traditional and confessional theology of the day, writers like Johann Semler, about the middle of the eighteenth century, began to point out wide differences between the theology of the schools and the vital religion of the New Testament. Others followed, Zechariä among the more reverent. It was not till Gabler, about the year 1787, that the historical method of study was insisted upon. Hence he is usually given credit for being the father of Biblical Theology in the modern sense. De Wette followed, about the beginning of the nineteenth century, dividing the field of investigation into periods and including teachings of the Apocrypha and of later Judaism. He, however, did not altogether free himself from dogmatic meth-

ods. Reuss, in his *History of Christian Theology in the Apostolic Age* (1852), made a contribution to the subject by taking into the account the Jewish religious thought and movements in the midst of which Christ and the apostles taught.

When Ferdinand C. Baur published his theories of the course of development of early Christian thought and literature a new twist was given to Biblical Theology. Beginning with the Hegelian conception of evolution by the interaction of opposites, Baur developed his entire New Testament scheme upon the supposed antagonism between Judaistic and Pauline forces, and the effort at reconciliation between the contending parties. Neander ably combatted this view, and also emphasized the necessity of observing the individual characteristics of the several writers, and then to discover the underlying unity in them all. In this way the study became less mechanical and more vital in character. So in the New Testament, Biblical Theology became something more than the analysis of separate lines or strands of New Testament teaching. The Scripture light came, to be sure, not in one white stream, but as through a prism, by which there could be discerned the play of divine colors, due to difference in time, place and individual characteristics. So the unity in diversity and diversity in the unity were equally recognized. Particularly did Schultz, in his prodigious work on Old Testament Theology, undertake to show how the Biblical religion advanced from the earliest beginnings to its higher, maturer forms, presenting the moral and religious beliefs and ideals considered in themselves and in their living connections as historically two-fold.

There was then an internal development of this study, some writers analyzing the Biblical teachings into various types, as priestly, prophetic, wisdom; some treating the material by periods, as the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, the Prophetic, etc. Then in the New Testament we have Petrine, Pauline, Johannine, etc.

In the Old Testament field, such names as Hengstenberg, Oehler, Ewald, Kuenen, Schultz, might be mentioned in a lengthy list of able writers. In the New, Schmidt, Reuss, Van

Oosterzee, Weiss, Beyschlag, Holtzmann, Jülicher and others. Recently there have been few, if any works, attempting to cover the entire field of Old Testament or New Testament Theology. There have been very many treatises upon particular periods and problems like Pfeiderer's *Paulinism*, and Wendt's *The Teaching of Jesus*, in German, and Steven's *Pauline and Johannine Theology*, Brigg's *Messianic Prophecy*, and his *Messiah of the Gospels and the Messiah of the Apostles*. E. F. Scott's *The Fourth Gospel*, 1906, and Robert Scott's *The Pauline Epistles*, 1909, might be mentioned among the more recent works by English scholars, covering particular problems. Many smaller volumes have appeared upon the more specific fields of discussions, as Bruce's *Kingdom of God*, covering only the teachings according to the Synoptics, your own Prof. A. T. Robertson's *Teaching of Jesus Concerning God the Father*. These are but samples of the different types. It may be fitting, after this imperfect sketch of the rise and general progress of Biblical Theology, to call attention to some of the more important forces that have been influential in shaping the history of this study.

Enough has already been said to vindicate the fact that the passing of the scholastic method of deduction and the coming of the method of induction made Biblical Theology possible; when the subjectivism of Aristotelian Philosophy yielded to the objective methods of Lord Bacon, the historical mode of study was inevitable. "First get your facts—then draw your conclusions!" Not "Think it out, then place your facts in their proper pigeon holes". It was this change of viewpoint which brought into being all the scientific pursuits of this remarkable age.

Besides the rise of the inductive and historical method of study, we may mention the impulse given to all branches of Biblical learning by the rise and development of the Historical Criticism. Biblical Theology, born about the same time and out of the same forces, drew upon the results of the Higher Criticism, and so there was made possible a more thorough and scientific study of the theology of the Scriptures. Another shaping influence cannot be overlooked. Fifty years ago,

the very same year of the founding of this Seminary (1859), Charles Darwin issued his famous book, *The Origin of the Species*. As the one in the life of Southern Baptists, so the other in the world of thought, was epoch-making. And while the so-called Biblical Theology antedates this work of Darwin by another half century, yet it cannot be questioned that the method of approach which the theory of evolution has given to every modern field of learning has been one of the most important influences in the growth of this and all other modern studies.

Still another force that cannot be forgotten is the rise of the science of Comparative Religion. Once it was quite common among some Christian scholars to despise all the so-called ethnic faiths. Their own religion being true in every particular, all others were false in every particular. Theirs came from God, all the rest from the devil, or at best from the depravity of the human heart. A change began to manifest itself. Nothing seemed more worthy of study than the facts of religion. All phenomena of human life, more particularly those which came from man's propensity to feel after God, if perchance they might find him, were to be required as worthy of careful consideration and earnest study. We studied the ethnic languages, customs, laws, governments, handicraft, why not ethnic faiths?

Another trend should be briefly noticed. The signal awakening of interest in ethical and sociological questions, with its quickening of the social consciousness, has shown itself in this department of Biblical study. Once Biblical Theology gave but scant attention to the ethical teachings of Scripture. Today they hold a prominent place. It remained for comparatively recent students of the Scriptures to perceive that one of the most conspicuous and fundamental teachings of our Lord—if indeed it was not the central doctrine of his message—was that of "The Kingdom of God". Neither Israel's great lawgiver, Moses, nor the spiritual guides, the prophets, made any distinction between ethical and religious duties, and the leading Christian apostle swept away altogether the line of demarkation between the sacred and the secular in the words, "Whatsoever ye do,

whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God". Dr. C. H. Toy, once a professor in this Seminary, emphasized the ethical teachings in his *Judaism and Christianity*. These now hold a much larger place than formerly in most recent discussions. Now all these forces, when brought together, constitute a sufficient explanation of the most marked present tendency in Biblical Theology, namely, the tendency to lose itself in the larger field of the history of religion.

Dr. Broadus used to say, "You really never know anything till you know it historically". The historical method of study will not be abandoned. That there is a historical development of theology within the Scriptures, will not be denied by any sober student of the subject; that much light can be thrown upon Israel's religious life and that of the early Christians by a knowledge of the life of the peoples with whom they came in contact, none will call in question. We have come to realize fully and acknowledge frankly that there is no such thing as two absolutely separate kinds of history, one called sacred and the other profane, any more than there was a double language, one sacred and the other profane. But the serious question confronting Biblical Theology just now is itself a double one: first, whether it will remain theological, and second, whether it will remain Biblical. The name Biblical Theology was never quite a fortunate one, as a name, but the tendency of which we speak goes deeper than that of a name. In the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, the editors, Messrs. Cheyne and Black, say: "With regard to Biblical Theology the editors are not without the hope that they may have helped to pave the way for a more satisfactory treatment of that important subject which is rapidly becoming a history of the movement of religious life and thought within the Jewish and Christian church."

Karl Budde, in an address made when last in this country, proclaimed that theology is already transformed into the history of religion, and is becoming the physiology of religion, or better still, the biology of religion.

Prof. Burton, in an address on "The Problems of New Testament Study", has lately said: "It is a question fairly open to debate, whether it is scientific to recognize a New Testament de-



partment the limits of which are defined in advance by the limits of the canon. . . . . In fact, the principle is already practically conceded. The transformation of the New Testament department from an interpretative and semi-systematic discipline into a distinctly historical study is already well advanced and lacks little but a change of name to complete it." In other words, just as Systematic Theology tends to be absorbed in the larger realm of the philosophy of religion, or into the general field of the science of religion, so Biblical Theology is becoming the history of the religion of Israel and history of early Christianity.

Professor Harnack, in an address delivered on the same occasion as Prof. Burton's, in commenting upon and favoring the same tendency, remarked: "I do not, of course, mean that our faculties of Christian Theology shall be turned into faculties of the General History of Religion; but still I am quite sure that the progress of knowledge depends on observing the connection of both."

This *religionsgeschichtliche* movement, led by such scholars as Gunkel, Bousset and others, is the result of wide researches in the religions of the world, the finding of phenomena in them similar to those in the Hebrew and Christian religions; the tracing of contacts and of influences from without; the discovery of archaeological treasures such as the code of Hamurabi; the study of Hellenic influences upon Jewish and Christian thought, and the like. And this has led to the effort to trace all the various Biblical conceptions to sources in foreign religions, Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Greek.

We might mention a few examples of this change of method and viewpoint, e. g., the article of Kantsch in Hastings' fifth volume of his Bible Dictionary, on *The Religion of Israel*, Paul Wernle's *Beginnings of Christianity*, Pfeleiderer's *Primitive Christianity*, etc. Bernard Weiss calls his crowning work on New Testament Theology *The Religion of the New Testament*.

While we must concede that there is no isolation in learning, no Chinese wall to be built about the history or the literature of the Bible, and that we never understand thoroughly a seg-

ment unless we have knowledge of the circle of which it is a part; yet it is not difficult to discern the implication of this syncretistic, naturalists viewpoint. It sees in Christianity but one of the many religions of the world. The distinction of the older theologians between natural and revealed religion is set aside. They are all natural or all revealed, as you please. The Bible is the record of certain stages of religious belief among a certain people, a very religious people. It is certainly that. Is it no more than that?

Reuss makes this thoughtful distinction: "Theologians exist only among people who believe in revelation. . . . Paganism and natural religion produce philosophy, not theology." Is Christian theology being paganized, or is it the better discovered by the modern workers in this field? Of course, what Biblical Theology in any particular institution will be will depend upon the man who teaches it, the presuppositions with which he approaches it. I am presenting the fact of certain tendencies that are manifest to all who are acquainted with the present situation as disclosed by the large body of the literature on the subject. One or two other trends should be observed. The modern interest in psychology has undoubtedly had its influence upon this field of study. More scientific efforts have been made to trace the mind of prophets, the apostles and of the Great Teacher himself; to interpret the religious phenomena in the light of modern psychological investigation; finding the central thought or principle of Jesus, of Paul and the rest, and trying to trace the mind in its natural unfoldment.

This fact has tended to remove Biblical Theology still further from the field of Exegetical Theology. There is now a decided loss of interest in the distinctions once made by minute attention to grammar and lexicon. Interpretation becomes a far larger and richer thing, it enters into mind realm of the writer not simply through his moods and tenses, but by tracing the subtler links of his thought; by his silences as well as by his sayings; by distinguishing between the fundamental and the incidental in his thought processes; showing how the central idea of the writer is unfolded; by discussing the relative values the writer puts upon each of his teachings. This is one reason why the re-

cent books are not dry discussions of abstract doctrines, with endless references to dry texts; but speak in terms of personal or vital human relations. They are religious rather than theological.

In the older psychology one looked in on his separate faculties and observed them at work, apparently not thinking much of the one self who was thinking, feeling, acting. The recent works on Biblical Theology are not looking so much at the separate doctrines as doctrines, but are tracing the course of the life which exemplifies these doctrines. The interest shifts from the scholastic to the human and religious. Thus the Biblical writings are being studied as phenomena of human consciousness and experience, rather than of philosophy and doctrine. And we may here quote the frequently repeated remark of Dr. Foster, of Chicago, as an example: "The question is not whether Jesus is as good as God, but whether God is as good as Jesus." The human is to the front; doctrine being the thought-expression of human consciousness, as religion is not God's thought of man, but man's consciousness of God.

Now, this new spirit and viewpoint is already tending to modify the rampant criticism made famous by Graf, Wellhausen, Kuenen and others. There has set in a reaction from the once prevalent wooden method of minute analysis of documents. The scholars in this department are looking more for the living synthesis, instead of the very doubtful and blood-letting analyses. The Biblical writings are not dead bodies for the dissecting table. They are writings with a vital religious message, which can no more be discovered by merely analytic process than you may understand Platonic philosophy by an analysis of the philosopher's brain-cells. It has been "the disease of criticism to be ever resolving into sources or analyzing into parts". Critics are seeing the absurdity of finding dove-tailed sentences and paragraphs everywhere, making of a literary production with a distinct religious message a sort of jigsaw puzzle, the like of which was never on land or sea. That there are evidences of compilation in some of the books is generally conceded; but critics will never again play the part of small boys with new jack knives. They will never make the

Bible again a thing of mere shreds and patches. Here the true student of Biblical Theology appears. He will recognize that it is the *message* of the book we seek, not *simply* the origin and growth of its outer shell. The latter is of real value only as it interprets to us the former. There can, of course, be no valid objection to the closest scrutiny of all the sources from which our knowledge of the Christian religion comes. It would be a poor compliment to our faith to take any other attitude. One is said to have asked Leopold von Ranke the secret of his masterly work on the history of the Popes. He replied: "I not only go to the sources, I go behind the sources." Scholars have been going to the sources of the Gospel story and have been going behind the sources. Let them go behind, and through and under and around, and tell us what they find. Only let them, in their zeal and learning, be sympathetic, judicial, candid.

Some of the workers in this department have unfortunately begun their task with presuppositions, which have vitiated and discredited in advance much of their work. They have commenced with an *opinion* eliminative of all that smacks of the supernatural. Too often stupendous conclusions have been made to hang upon a very slender hook. And so it has turned out that a science which began as a protest against the reign of the subjectivism of the scholastic and the mystic, itself fell into the subjectivism of a new scholasticism—that of a subjective criticism and rationalism. This is why the Tübingen *Tendenz* theory is no more—Messrs. Cheyne and Black, as it were, hitting it its final blow in the words: "It is perhaps time that the Bible should cease to be regarded as a store-house of more or less competing systems." (Preface.)

Paul Wernle suggests that "Jesus, above all else, was our Savior from the theologians". We certainly need to be saved from all theologians who approach the Book with any other than a sympathetic and reverent attitude. Prof. Harnack (in the address to which reference has already been made) quotes Grimm as making the fine observation that knowledge has no secrets, or privileged mysteries, but many *secrecies*; no *Geheimnisse*, but many *Heimlichkeiten*. The Christian religion in

common with all knowledge, indeed preëminently, yields her secrecies to those who love her. The secret of the Lord is still with them that fear him; that possess that fear which is the beginning of wisdom.

Having called attention to certain forces which have influenced the development of Biblical Theology, it may not be amiss to suggest some of the particular questions which seem now to be those engaging most largely the attention of the scholars in this department. New Testament problems are now in the foreground, as Old Testament problems were two or three decades ago. The criticism once given to the older books is now turned upon the new. The first century origin of most of the New Testament books is now quite generally established. But critics are still wrestling with the problem of the earliest sources of our knowledge of Christ and his teachings, in order that we may know what Christ actually taught, as he himself left nothing in writing. Then there is the problem of distinguishing between what Christ said and what admiring disciples who felt the thrill of his inspiring life thought he must have said; or between what Christ really taught and what a generation unable to rid itself of the limitations and prepossessions of the current Jewish theological conceptions read into his words. How much, in fact, did Jesus hold in common with the Jewish views of his day? It is a common observation of even the careful reader of the Gospel of John that it is difficult to tell at times just where Christ's words stop and John's reflections upon them begin. Is something like this true of all the Gospel narratives? Should we say that John read his own thoughts back into the mouth of Jesus, or that John "was more deeply penetrated than the rest with the original spirit and inward form of the teaching of the Master"? Is it possible to detect "those traits and their coloring which betray the idealizing influence of reverence and love"? What was the attitude of Jesus toward the Messianic hope? Did he encourage it or discourage it? Did he believe himself to be the Messiah? What, indeed, was the nature of the fundamental consciousness of Jesus? That of Messiah or that of Son? Son of Man, or Son of God? And what did these expressions mean in his mouth?

Which of the conflicting notions of the Kingdom of God was really his? What were the eschatological teachings of Jesus— if he indeed had any? Further, whose teachings really made the Christianity of the early churches, those of Jesus or of Paul? Indeed, the entire question of Paul's relation to the Christianity of his day is still a live question in Biblical Theology. "Jesus or Paul," says Wrede, "this alternative characterizes at least in part the religious and theological warfare of the present". In short, did Jesus make early Christianity or did early Christianity make Jesus? Or did Paul unmake both Jesus and Christianity? In short, the question of *origins*, both as regards individual productions and also the wider influences of world-thought, is the engaging one.

The question may now be asked, "Has Biblical Theology any further mission now that it tends to lose itself in the larger sea of the history of religion? None will begrudge the contribution Biblical Theology has made or may make to the comparative study of religion; nor will any deprecate the aid it may receive from the study of the history and the science of religion. Yet we are inclined to think Biblical Theology must again find itself if it would fulfill its highest destiny. The answer to the question, has Biblical Theology still a mission, will depend much upon whether one regards the Bible as in any sense authoritative in matters of religion. Has the Bible, as a norm of faith, done its work? Was it, in its entirety, to be like the law—a school-master to bring us to Christ—and that Christ the Christ of Christian consciousness? So some would have us believe.

Allow me to become prophet long enough to predict the return of Biblical Theology to its more distinctive function. It will return greatly strengthened and enriched by that which critical, historical and comparative studies have given her. The last fifty years have not been in vain. A decade or two of foreign travel will not make her an alien. Many inadequate and false conceptions have been left behind and much of real value has become a permanent possession. The tendency to reduce Christianity to the level of other religions by making the similarities loom large will react. For the contrasts will become

all the clearer through the comparison; the vastly richer context of the religion of Jesus Christ will be the more clearly manifest. The teachings of Christianity can never be made the absolute religion by a process of elimination—certainly not by reducing it to that which all religions hold in common, nor by minimizing the permanent values wrapped up in *the historic and personal Christ*. His unique personality will be the great fact which will bring this study again to its own, and establish the Bible as a normative, regulative, conserving force in the development of Christian life and doctrine. “Ye study the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.” In a word, Biblical Theology will be Biblical still; and in the best sense, theology still. The science of religion is anthropological, ethnological, sociological, philosophical. This is man reaching up. Theology implies that there is a God who reaches down. Dr. Briggs, in his *Study of the Holy Scriptures*, deprecating the substitution of the history of religion in Bible times for Biblical Theology, says: “Biblical Theology will act as a conserving and reconciling force in the theology of the next century.” Not only this, but real Biblical Theology will tend to insure a development of Christianity which shall be not away from, but in accordance with its central historic principles, toward its Founder and not away from him.

And while it will probably always be true that the current philosophy of any age will inevitably influence the theological conceptions of that age—for metaphysics will intrude—the Ritschlians to the contrary notwithstanding—yet in such measure as this study lays stress upon the truly Biblical, it will be a steadying, regulative force in the unfolding of theological opinions. Once Plato bound theology hand and foot. Later, “Aristotle became king in Zion”. Biblical Theology has a mission in preventing our being captured by any system of philosophic thought, from becoming Platonian, Aristotelian, Kantian, Hegelian, Darwinian, Ritschlian in turn and nothing long. And we may add, it will make of Christian thought something larger than Calvinism, or Arminianism, or any other theological system as such. It will lay the stress where

the Scriptures lay it, upon the religious facts of life; for theology is of value only as it is true to the truth of life, and as it ministers to the enrichment of life. I may say in this presence that the more recent movements, with all the dangers with which they may be fraught, should eventually minister to the type of religious thought represented by Baptists; for these tendencies have clearly emphasized the truth, that "the Christian religion is not a code of beliefs, nor a mere ecclesiastical organization, it is fundamentally a hope, a redemption, a life".

So Biblical Theology has performed and will perform great service for Christian thought and life. It has already had its part slaying the older method of making theologies by the mere proof-text method. It has emphasized the fact that revelation is not the dead level of a prairie, but a varied stretch of valley, mountain, plain, wooded hill and sky line, with perspective and continuously unfolding vistas. An archaeologist found a modern peasant's hut, constructed of stones, fragments of the ruins of an ancient classic temple. But the hut was not classic, though every stone of it came from a Greek temple. Modern theologies may be made of Scripture fragments and yet be as unscriptural and unchristian as the peasant's hut is removed from likeness to the Parthenon. Biblical Theology has a mission of disclosing the vital, throbbing religious and ethical realities which have made Christianity what it is, and which must continue to nourish it, if it is to abide in power.

In Biblical Theology we have one of the very best correctives of the abuses of criticism; for Biblical Theology discloses the historical unfolding of those redemptive forces which culminate in Jesus Christ. It is the great function of the Bible to present this progressive unfolding. Real Biblical Theology sets itself to the task of disclosing what is temporary and incidental and what is of permanent value in this development. There is a vast difference between the question what is of value in understanding the message of a writer and what is of worth in the making of life. The students of theology of the Scriptures will give less time to petty matters of criticism and will emphasize the truly spiritual values. It is of interest to the historian, the archaeologist, the literary critic to know how a writing came to



be what it is; but the theologian, recognizing that he is dealing with writings that are above all things religious, will treat them as such. No analysis of the Biblical writings, no discovery of original sources, can have of itself a religious value. And as Prof. Potter, of Yale, has recently said, "No analysis of the Gospels, no reconstruction of the sources, no critical life of Jesus, no exposition of his teachings, has or can have the religious power that the Gospels themselves possess".

Ultimately Biblical Theology, as indeed every Biblical study, must be tested by the question, Does it help to the appreciation of the *religious* values of the Book? It is just here that modern Biblical investigation has, I think, been weakest. I fear the last fifty years, with all the scientific methods that have been used, have not strengthened the hold of the Bible upon the religious affections, the consciences and characters of the people. The work has been as yet too largely negative. The Bible must be set to the performance of its true function in enriching the moral and spiritual life of the world, or else Bible study is but the scratching of the surface.

Biblical Theology has a debt and a peculiar mission to Protestantism. From the nature of the case it has been chiefly fostered by Protestants. The Bible is its field, and Protestants have regarded the Bible as preëminently the source of their theology. Protestants, too, have had, potentially at least, that historic perspective which is begotten of the belief that in every Christian there is the presence of the living, ever-leading Spirit. But apparently Protestants became distrustful both of the Bible and the living Spirit, and so sought refuge in authoritative creeds, crystalized pronouncements which have often become dead weights upon living spirits. Biblical Theology is still needed to bring Protestantism to its own.

My brethren, there are two tendencies which seem well-nigh indestructible in every age, both of which are fatal to vital religion. One is the tendency to convert religion into a tradition, a crystalized thought form to be received without passionate self-enlistment and to be handed down without addition or subtraction. The other is to sublimate religion into a mere philosophical speculation, or an affectional rhapsody. The latter

evaporates it, as the former petrifies it. When needy men ask for bread, they do not want a stone. When they thirst for the water of life they do not require *vapor*.