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I.

THE AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

ONE of our old shipmasters of the pre-steamer days tells of a naïve but perhaps not unaccountable exclamation of one of his passengers. From the day they left Liverpool until they passed the banks of Newfoundland the voyage had been foggy and cloudy, and as on a certain other voyage of a better known traveller, "neither sun nor stars in many days appeared." At last, in the early evening, the sky cleared. The young lady in question, coming from below, found a soft clear light silvering the ship's deck. As one who has discovered a new planet, she rushed back to the cabin, crying with enthusiasm, "Oh, come right up and see the American moon!"

Now, to speak of the "American Sunday-school" might seem, at first view, as indefensible as to speak of the "American moon." The world is now belted with Sunday-schools, and it might appear as if the phrase meant nothing more than the Sunday-schools in America. But much more than that is intended by it. It is the function of America to Americanize. All our national ease of mind is based on a firm conviction of this national tendency. Democracy is no new thing. Greece knew it well. Rome tried it. Small European communities have made it answer. But when it crossed the Atlantic, that which failed under Greece and Rome got itself Americanized. The republic took on a new form and developed new virtues. Accordingly, it is with hopeful equanimity that we have stood by and seen immigration dilute our citizenship. The stalwart population, intelligent, God-fearing, sober and industrious, which filled the earlier borders of the country, has not multiplied

THE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE IN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES.

THE Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the sources whence we derive Christian doctrine, and the means of grace whereby God communicates to us the blessings of redemption and through which we may approach unto the heavenly throne. It is of fundamental importance that the ministers of the Word should be thoroughly trained in the sacred oracles, in their length and breadth, their height and depth, and in their entirety. Only by such a training can the ministers become safe guides to the people of God and wise counsellors in the way of salvation.

The Bible of the Christian Church was composed in three ancient languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. No one can gain access to the original springs of the divine Word except through the mastery of these ancient languages. All interpretation must depend upon grammatical interpretation, and that is possible only through a knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek grammar. No interpretation can be any other than second hand that is not based on the study of the original text.

A knowledge of the original languages of the Bible is necessary not only for grammatical interpretation, but also for many other departments of Biblical study. Little can be done in determining the numberless questions of Textual Criticism without a knowledge of the original text. The problems of the Higher or Literary Criticism must ever remain in many respects obscure and uncertain to those who do not know the literary forms and styles of the original documents. A large part of the prejudice against Biblical Criticism is due to the neglect of the original texts by the ministry. No exegesis can be reliable that is not made in the lines of the methods of reasoning, rhetorical forms and the scenery and life of the authors of the sacred books. Nothing can be more absurd than the notion that any uneducated person or partially educated person is able to understand and to teach the sublime doctrines and the profound mysteries of the Sacred Scriptures. Such persons may find on the surface sufficient for their souls' redemption and comfort. Their familiarity with the marrow of the Gospel and the Psalter will bring them into communion with Jesus Christ, and they will grow in grace thereby. But the deeper and more extensive their studies, the more are they exposed to errors and perils of every kind that are ready to entrap them on every side as they have entrapped others, and experienced guides are indispensable for their progress and their safety.

The great mass of the Scriptures remain sealed and unknown to the ordinary reader. A small portion of the Bible is really known and still less really used by the majority of Christians. They have access to it, but do not know and cannot know it except through teachers qualified to instruct them. They only know the elements, and do not know that which is indispensable to the higher grades of knowledge and sanctification.

Protestantism has ever insisted upon the importance of giving the Bible to

the people. And this has been fruitful in good. But it also has its evil consequences. This was seen at the first Reformation and during the progress of the second Reformation in the springing up of a vast number of sects founded by men who supposed that with the English or German Bible in their hands they knew more than the most highly educated doctors. They thought that they were divinely guided to bring forth new doctrines from the Scriptures, when really they were covering the Bible with their conceits and follies and making it a mirror to reflect their own crudity and ignorance. The Bible is the most dangerous of books in the hands of ignorant and fanatical preachers.

The Christian Church in all ages has found it necessary to train the ministry in a knowledge of divine things. It is perilous to commit the treasures of the divine Word into the hands of men who are so wise as to do without a theological education.

When Protestantism gave the Bible to the people it thereby pledged itself to furnish the people with teachers trained in the most efficient way to expound it to them.

The Protestant Reformers were not only trained men, the most finished scholars of their times in Theological Science, but they were also masters of the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. They could not have done their work without this knowledge of the divine originals. Thomas Cartwright, the Father of Puritanism, was one of the best Hebraists of his time. The Westminster divines and the Puritan Fathers knew their Bibles much better than their descendants. Among the first professorships in the colleges and universities of Protestantism were professorships of Greek and Hebrew, and these chairs, with the chair of Divinity, made up the entire department of the earlier theological education of the Protestant ministry. In the latter part of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, Biblical studies were neglected and other chairs of instruction were multiplied in the theological seminaries at the cost of Biblical instruction. But in the second half of our century there has been a great change, and Biblical studies are now at the front ; only they have not sufficient provision for their prosecution in the present curriculum of the American colleges and theological seminaries.

There can be no safe exegesis, yes, there can be no safe dogmatics, without a fundamental Hebrew and Greek Exegesis. The tendency of dogmatic theology is to use the Bible and too often abuse it, in the interests of a dogmatic system which is moulded by the philosophical views, the metaphysical opinions, the logical methods, and the standpoint of the theologian and that of his denomination or school. I have no sympathy with those who are opposed to dogmatic theology. I think that it is a necessary part of theological discipline. It is clear to me that it must use the metaphysical and mystic elements, and that *speculation* is indispensable to accomplish its best results. But dogmaticians should be honest, and give credit to the sources whence they derive their material. It is not honest to attribute to the Scriptures what is derived from speculation, or from metaphysics, or mysticism. I have no sympathy with the school of Ritschl in its efforts to get rid of these important elements

of dogmatics. I agree with Martensen and Dörner in the effort to discriminate the sources, and to use them all to their best advantage. And yet there can be little doubt that dogmatic theology has often been a foe to a sound exegesis. This is especially true of the scholastic divines of Romanism and Protestantism. A vast number of misinterpretations of Scripture have come into our text-books of Divinity and into our popular traditions, and are stereotyped in preaching phrases and in the prayers of our deacons and elders. We have all been brought up in their atmosphere. I have found it the most distressing part of my study of the Bible to have so many of these traditional interpretations undermined and destroyed. As I study the Bible, an increasing number of them are slain by the flaming sword of divine truth, so that the Bible has become to me a new Book. This is the experience of a large number of Biblical scholars in our day. A silent but vast revolution is in progress. The Bible is asserting its rights against centuries of dogmatism that have neglected it and abused it. It is indispensable to soundness in the faith and genuine theological progress that we should let the scholastic divinity shift for itself and fall back ourselves on the creeds of the Reformation and the Westminster symbols.

The present unfortunate condition of theological science is due to the neglect of the study of the originals of the Bible, and a dependence upon a superficial reading of the English Version for proof texts, or for texts of sermons and talks for lecture-room and prayer meeting. Such teaching and such preaching have filled our minds and books with a multitude of traditional errors.

There has been a great revival of Biblical study in the past fifteen years. The Hebrew and Greek originals of the Scriptures have been studied more than at any time since the seventeenth century. Biblical scholarship has assumed the importance that it had in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is only natural that a study of the English Bible should share in that advance.

It is necessary that theological students should be thoroughly trained in the Greek and Hebrew Bibles. Those who have tried theological education based on a study of the English Bible only have failed, as they deserved. Such efforts always will fail. There may be exceptional cases in which ministers may be excused from the study of the originals, but these must remain exceptions, and those who are thus excused should understand that they are just so far deficient, and always will remain deficient. There are so-called evangelists, and some ministers, who have forgotten their Hebrew and Greek, who scorn the Biblical training of theological seminaries, and who think that the English Bible is good enough for them. They think that they have the key to unlock its treasures that Greek and Hebrew professors have not found. But it is evident to the professors who may chance to listen to them, that the only key they have is their own conceit, that opens the door of their own folly.

There is no calling in life in which men can attain proficiency and permanent success without a long, patient, persistent, technical training. It is only

the modern so-called evangelist who steps forth fully equipped without an education, like Pallas from the brain of Zeus. The twelve Apostles needed training for many months by the Messiah himself before he commissioned them to preach his Gospel, and Paul had to be trained in the best schools of Grecian and Jewish culture ; but in our days men are rising up of such extraordinary genius that they can spring into the pulpit from any calling in life, and teach the best-trained ministers how to interpret and expound the Scriptures. If only they have the rare qualifications of coarseness and vulgarity, and can speak in such bad English as to shock the children from our public schools, they may hope to have wonderful success in expounding the Scriptures not only to the masses, but especially to the classes, and, above all, to the clergy, who, it is supposed, are not accustomed to study the Scriptures in their bare reality and in common sense methods.

The Church is sufficiently familiar with such sounding brass and clanging cymbals. The only way to overcome such ignorance is by the spread of knowledge. The Church ought to do more for the expounding of the English Bible, and to train its ministers more efficiently for this work.

The ministry must know the originals and draw their inspiration from the originals, but they have to teach their people through the medium of the *English Bible*, and, therefore, it is necessary that they should understand this medium and that they should have facility in its use. The study of the English Bible is not to do away with a study of the Greek and Hebrew Bibles, but is rather to be the medium through which the knowledge of the original Scriptures may be communicated to the people. Those who have mastered the originals are the only ones competent to use the English Bible for the instruction of the people. Their knowledge of the originals guards them from most of the errors and blunders to which I have referred, and opens up to them paths of heavenly wisdom that are closed to all others. But the knowledge of the originals will be of little service to them as public teachers unless they can use the English Bible as the medium by which they are to instruct the people. They need thorough training in the use of the English Bible as well as in the original Scriptures, and only in this way does their knowledge of the originals attain its practical importance and bestow its blessings through the ministry on the Church. In my opinion, the institutions of learning have been neglecting the English Bible, and it is high time that its study should take a prominent place in the curriculum of every theological seminary.

The study of the English Bible in the theological seminary has, therefore, this as its aim : (1) To set the English Bible in the light of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek originals ; (2) to impregnate the English Bible with the spirit and life of the originals ; (3) to train the student to expound the English Bible in that light and spirit and life ; (4) to give him a comprehensive view of the whole Bible, showing him the principles of its structure, the variety and unity of its organism ; (5) to set the whole Scripture in the light shining from the Throne of God.

Such a study of the English Bible in the curriculum of a theological semi-

nary should not interfere with any existing courses of study. The Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament need more time for their study, and this work cannot be curtailed for the new work. It should go with a new department. The new department that can do this work to the best advantage is the department of Biblical Theology. No Biblical Theology can be constructed without a thorough knowledge of the originals, but it cannot require the student to use the original passages in its study, because that would imply a facility which only the most accomplished Biblical scholars possess. It is necessary, therefore, that the English Bible should be used in the class-room in the light of the original text.

Biblical Theology has as its aim to present the theology of the Bible in its Biblical organism within the Sacred Scriptures themselves. Biblical Theology discards speculation, metaphysics, mysticism, and the history of doctrine, as well as the ecclesiastical symbols—all those other elements upon which dogmatic theology depends, and limits itself to the Bible. The Bible is its one and only source. But it has to do with the whole Bible, and not with selections or proof passages from it. Hence it is more comprehensive of the Bible than the dogmatic system. It includes religion and morals, as well as doctrines of faith. It accordingly enters into the field of Biblical History on the one side, and it covers the field of practical religious life on the other side. It is the crown of Bible Study. It presupposes every other department of Biblical Study. There is nothing in the Bible of any importance that does not contribute to its resources, or is not comprehended within its lines. Accordingly, Biblical Theology is the department of theological instruction that is best adapted to give instruction in the English Bible.

There are several different methods of teaching Biblical Theology, and accordingly there may be several different methods of teaching the English Bible in connection with it. Each teacher will make his own way, and enrich it with his individuality and his experience. Such a study of the English Bible in connection with the department of Biblical Theology is helpful in many ways. It gives the student a familiarity with the length and breadth of the Sacred Scriptures. The study of the original text favors detailed, minute examination of passages. It is impossible to do more than go over specimens of the Bible. There is danger that many important parts of the Scriptures may be neglected. The ordinary method in the German universities encourages the study of a few books, such as Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, Job, and Minor Prophets in the Old Testament. It is not common to teach other portions of the Old Testament in the class-room. Accordingly, students and professors both neglect the other portions of the Old Testament. There are few, and those inadequate and unsatisfactory, helps for many of the other books. It has been my method to give my students selections of the most important sections of the Old Testament, so that they might have a knowledge of specimens of all of the writings.

Each of these methods has its advantages and disadvantages. I think that it would be easy to show that considerable portions of the New Testament have

been neglected in the class-rooms of German universities and American theological seminaries, and that some of the defects in modern theology are due to this method.

It is impossible, in a three years' course of theological study, to go over the whole Bible in the original text. It would require six or seven years of close application to accomplish this. Therefore, it is indispensable, if the student is to have a knowledge of the Bible in all its parts and as a whole, that he should supplement his study of the original texts by study of the English Bible in all other passages. It has been my custom to read selections from all the writings of the Old Testament in Hebrew with my classes, and urge them at the same time to read the rest of the books, except these selections, in their English Bibles. But we need something more than this. There should be a study of these passages of the English Bible as a complement to the study of the specimens of the Hebrew and Greek Bibles.

The study of the Scriptures in connection with a course of Biblical Theology enables, yes, requires the professor to study all the books of the Bible in their order of development and their relation. If the professor is dealing with the doctrine of Creation in the Old Testament, he is obliged to bring every passage relating to the subject under review, and to trace the development of the doctrine from writing to writing. If now in his examination he gives his class the most important passages of the Old Testament, in which this doctrine is presented, and requires them to expound them, they connect the doctrine with the passages in a way that is not possible in any other method. If the professor is dealing with the doctrine of Repentance in the New Testament, all the passages will come under review in their order of development, and this doctrine will stand out in all its practical bearings fresh from the divine sources themselves with a power that will never be forgotten, and these passages will ever remain associated with the doctrine. And so, as one topic after another is taken up, the student is led through the entire Bible.

If now another method of teaching Bible Theology is adopted, and the theology of each writing is considered by itself in its order of composition, the writings will be searched from every point of view by professor and by student.

This method of studying the English Bible will be helpful in many directions: (1) It will give the student a knowledge of the structure, of the wonderful variety and richness of the Bible, of its consistency, harmony, and unity, such as can be attained in no other way.

(2) It will be helpful to the study of dogmatic theology. One of the greatest difficulties in a course of dogmatics is to fix the proof texts in the mind of the student. But if he has been accustomed, in his course of Biblical Theology, to find the doctrine in its Scriptural bed and to associate it with its native source, dogmatic theology will gain reinforcement that is much needed.

(3) The practical department will be aided; the student's mind will be stored with passages of Scripture in organic connection; the material will be enriched with stores of texts, no longer isolated, but in their context, and in-

terrelated with others of kindred theme, so that they will be already pregnant and ready to yield fruit in rich discourse.

(4) The devotions of the students will be enriched by a knowledge of the English Psalter and the prayers and praise of the Scriptures, which take a very important place in any complete system of Biblical Theology.

It is easy to see that there may be abundant advantages in many directions from a systematic course of study of the English Bible in our theological seminaries. There are perils in several directions if such a course should be urged in conflict with the more technical studies, and if any one should presume to make it a sufficient substitute for a study of the original texts ; but there are no reasons, so far as I can see, why we may not give it a place in the regular course of theological study, where it will enrich the entire course and help all the departments, and be fruitful in blessing to the religious life of professors and students.

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