

# THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

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## I. THE OBJECT AND SCOPE OF WRITTEN REVELATION.

WE use the term Revelation, in its wider signification, as the name of the Sacred Scriptures, and as implying divine authority for the whole, just as we call the whole the Word of God. Both of these names imply the orthodox view of inspiration. We shall assume that the book is as distinctly divine as if it all were actually revealed, while it is as distinctly human as if it all were of human origin. It is the analogue of the Incarnate Word, in whom perfect divinity and inerrant humanity meet in one person—the God-man. While it is not the purpose at this time to discuss this view, it will, no doubt, appear incidentally that no other working hypothesis is so satisfactory as this, no matter what inductions we seek to make from the Scriptures.

Writing looks to permanent preservation in unvarying form, and carries authority when duly authenticated. The “Ten Words” were written on tables of stone by the finger of God, and kept in the ark of the testimony under the most awful sanctions. Moses wrote his law in a book, and put it either in or beside the ark for a witness. Samuel wrote the “manner of the kingdom” in a book. Christ said to Satan, “It is written.”

There is no difference of opinion here. Nor is it important to settle whether there were previous writings from which much of the earlier books of revelation was taken, nor how far such writings may have been inspired.

It is now popular to say that the Scriptures are a growth, a de-

### III. THE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE IS DEMANDED BY THE NEEDS OF OUR DAY.<sup>1</sup>

The Stuart Robinson professorship has been established with a twofold purpose.

The need of a seminary discipline in the English Bible had long been felt. We cannot go all the way back to the time when the need, having become conscious, first began to express itself in words; but in 1881 the Presbytery of Bethel overtured the General Assembly to "recommend and urge upon the attention of the Boards of Directors of our theological seminaries the pressing demand for a more copious, thorough, and direct study of the book they are to preach, on the part of our theological students, not merely in private, but under the direction and lead of the professor." (*Assembly's Minutes*, 1881, page 370.) This Bethel Presbytery, on the same occasion, urgently prayed the Assembly "to lend its sanction and approval to the plan of substituting" in Columbia Seminary, which was then about to be reorganized, "for the exegetical study of the Scriptures in the original Hebrew and Greek that of the English Bible, old and new versions." In this last request the presbytery had overestimated the powers of the General Assembly, since the overture involved a change in the constitution of our church. But in response to the *first*, the Assembly formally called the attention of the directors of our theological seminaries to the overture, and expressed its hearty approval of any practicable measure which should secure a more careful study of the English Bible by our seminary students as a part of their theological training. (*Assembly's Minutes*, 1881, pp. 370, 371.) In 1882, also, there was presented from the Presbytery of Fayetteville an overture "relative to the establishment in our seminaries of a course of exegetical study of the Scriptures in the English language." In reply to this overture, the General Assembly of

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<sup>1</sup> Inaugural Address delivered in Union Seminary, May 3rd, 1892.

1882 referred the Presbytery of Fayetteville to the action of the General Assembly of 1881 as meeting the case presented; but it took occasion again to earnestly and respectfully call the attention of the directors of theological seminaries to the matter, and to request them to report to the next General Assembly any results which they might reach.<sup>1</sup> The Synod of Virginia, too, in October, 1882, respectfully suggested "to the trustees of the seminary"—our seminary—"the propriety of taking incipient measures to increase the provision for instruction." It, of course, goes without saying, that in addition to the united voices of Assemblies and Synods, private individuals had been busy in the endeavor to excite a pervading sentiment in favor of the speedy institution of such a discipline. To mention a single instance, the distinguished president of Davidson College—then professor of Biblical Instruction in Clarksville—traveled to this place, in June, 1882, of set purpose to forward the movement for increased study of the English Bible. Difficult, therefore, as it proved to be to raise the endowment fund, mighty struggle as it was, it is not surprising that in 1883 our Board of Directors determined to provide for instruction in the English Bible by the establishment of a new chair. Accordingly, these gentlemen invited the attention of the General Assembly of 1883 to the following resolution which they had adopted in their corporate capacity May 2, 1883:

*Resolved*, That the trustees of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, fully concurring with the General Assembly as to the importance of such study of the Bible as suggested by that body, yet, in view of the onerous duties now resting on the professors of the seminary, and the insufficiency of our existing income for the support of a separate chair, do not see the way open at the present time for the introduction of any measures for the end proposed, beyond the considerable instruction in the English Bible which is already distinctively imparted in this institution. At the present meeting of the corporation, however, plans have been inaugurated for an increase of income from further endowment, which, if successful, may accomplish the wishes indicated by the Assembly, and in which the trustees sympathize." (*Assembly's*

<sup>1</sup> See *Assembly's Minutes*, 1882, pages 564, 565.

*Minutes*, 1883, p. 34.) And in their annual reports to the General Assembly and to the Synods of Virginia and North Carolina, the trustees of the seminary state: "In response to a resolution of the Synod of Virginia (*Minutes* of 1882, p. 168), and impressed with the importance of initiating, at the present meeting of trustees, measures for the endowment of a fifth professorship in this seminary, to be known as the chair of *English Biblical Study and Pastoral Theology*, a committee (Rev. Drs. C. White, Rumples, Richardson, Dabney, and Peck) will address the Christian public, asking contributions to endow this chair." The trustees thus took worthy recognition of the need to which General Assembly, Synod, and private individuals had respectfully called their attention.

The friends of Union Seminary had also long felt another want, namely, that of a course in pastoral theology wider and more developed than was possible while that department was a mere appendage to the chair of systematic theology. In this feeling, the whole Synod of Virginia seems to have shared. And thus, we take it, is explained the non-specific, purely general way in which the Synod of 1882 called the attention of the Board of Trustees to the duty of "improving the provision for instruction in this institution." You will remember that the General Assembly had called attention to the need of greater facilities for the study of the English Bible; but the Synod called attention to the need of further "provision for instruction." It, though not formally saying so, wished work done in pastoral theology. The feeling was general then, perhaps, as it is now, that the *data* for the practical science of pastoral theology had never been sufficiently considered and systematized; that positive advance over anything already taught on this subject was quite possible; that for the suitable professor of pastoral theology there awaited a work akin in character to the *creative*. Nor was the impression less general that such a course would be followed by consequences of the highest practical value—the enablement of the student to turn his knowledge into wisdom, to use the treasures of his theological, Biblical, psychological researches with effect in dealing with men as pastor and teacher.

In this move to increase provision for instruction in practical

theology, the church fell in with one of the best things in the spirit of this age. Our age would turn all its knowledge to practical ends. It does not wish to know about things for the sake of knowing. It wishes to know about things for the sake of further achievement; *e. g.*, it does not wish to know simply of the great power of electricity, or the laws of its generation and dissipation, but to know it in such a way as to be able to make electricity man's servant—make it carry his messages to the ends of the earth, roll his cars, light his streets and home, cure his body of its ills. It may be that the age is wrong in considering, too generally, as practical ends only those which have to do with material advancement. Nevertheless, the practical turn of the age is one of its good characteristics. And if its outlook is too contracted—if its vision is too often like that of the garbage birds, on the earth, if it falls short of the needs of the soul, if it fails to look on the invisible as steadily as it should, it is yet true that Christian men should learn from this generation of the world that truth, grand as it is, precious as it is, is not after all the ultimate end, and that whatsoever philosophers have regarded it so were and are wrong; and they should come to see that truth itself, or our apprehension of truth, is in order to *character as God's servants and sons*; that the object of truth-getting is truth-using; that truth never attains its true value for us until we have got the power of its practical application to good ends. If any considerable help then, toward the use of one's knowledge, toward the application of that knowledge unto the practical end of building up God's kingdom, can be given by such a course of instruction, there should be such a discipline as Pastoral Theology.

Our wise Board of Trustees of 1883 attempted, consequently, in the founding of the so-called Fifth Professorship to make at least a partial provision for these two wants—instruction in the English Bible and in Pastoral Theology.

Perhaps such a composite chair cannot in the very nature of things, fully supply in either direction what has been desired. Certain it is, that *some* in our churches believe that the English Bible should receive the larger share of the chair's attention; while *not a few*, on the other hand, would make the Pastoral

Theology of the first importance, so much so as to let it absorb almost the entire energies of the chair. These latter insist that the English Bible, so far as studied should be a mere text-book of Pastoral Theology; that only those parts which are rich in matter bearing on homiletics or on pastoral conduct should be studied by this chair, and these only so far as they give help of a specific and practical sort to the student viewed as a prospective pastor and preacher.

Now, the importance of a chair of practical theology can hardly be overestimated. The subject is, indeed, worthy of the whole time of any man, no matter how mighty soever he be. It is true, also, that there is room for a large use of the English Bible in such a course. The general impression to which we have adverted, that much and rich Scripture teaching on the subject has not yet been put in proper shape, is probably correct. Nevertheless, the importance of the study of the English Bible is also hard to overestimate. The Assemblies of 1881 and 1882 were calling the attention of the Board to a real need, quite as real as that for a wider course in pastoral theology. And that call was for an increased acquaintance with the English Bible, for an exegetical study of that Bible. And the Board in its response to the Assemblies and Synod recognized the *at least tantamount* importance of the Biblical work of the chair, by naming it *not* the chair of "Pastoral Theology and English Biblical Study," *but*, of "English Biblical Study and Pastoral Theology," by their speaking in the report to the General Assembly and the two controlling Synods in 1885, of the chair of "*Biblical Theology with the English Bible as the text-book*," and by their general expressions touching the chair thenceforward. In the minutes of the meeting of the Board of 1888, it is indeed recorded that the Board instructs its financial agent to tell the people the purpose of the chair, viz.: "That it is intended to be the chair of English Biblical Study and Pastoral Theology, that the principal text-book is to be the English Bible, and the principal subject to be taught is the art of preaching and the best methods of conducting the public worship of God" (pp. 178-179 *Records of Trustees*). And *these* words, if we knew nothing of the previous history of

the chair, and nothing of its future history, yet at the time of their record might be considered, I think, as decisive in favor of the view that the chair is one simply of Pastoral Theology. The Board may, however, have an exegete competent to their interpretation in consistency with its past touching the chair, as with what was then to be its future in the same relation. About that future, at any rate, as about its past, there can be no doubt. In 1889 (*Extracts*, p. 104), the following resolution was recommended and adopted: "That the Board more clearly define the scope of the Fifth Professorship as embracing the study of the English Scriptures and Pastoral Theology. In the study of the English Scriptures we would include the authorship, period, and contents of each book; the central thought of each book, and its relation to the other books in the development of doctrine—in other words Biblical Theology. Under Pastoral Theology full instruction should be given in all matters of practical church work, such as Sunday-schools, church finance, protracted services and the evangelistic work." In these words the two branches of the chair's work are sharply discriminated and defined. The chair is to do a work in pastoral theology. It is also to do a work in biblical theology, which is a more precise determination of the kind of exegetical work which it is to do. The Board at the same meeting appears to have changed the name of the chair to that of "Biblical and Pastoral Theology." This action on the part of the Board was highly gratifying to the Synod of Virginia. For in its minutes of 1889 we find this resolution recommended and adopted: "That the Synod approves the action of the Board of Directors of Union Theological Seminary in giving to the new professorship the name of 'the chair of Biblical and Pastoral Theology,' and further that the Stated Clerk be directed through the religious press to call special attention to the name given to the new chair, and publish the resolution of the Board of Directors."

Those who would make pastoral theology absorb the whole energy of the chair would violate the constitution of the chair, as determined in the manner we have seen—determined by church courts, by the planning of the directors, and the purpose of the people in their contributions.

Now, far be it from us to make little of the value of pastoral theology, or even to seem to do it. Nothing could be further from our intention. We have already expressed our sense of its great importance; and we assert further that it is the most delightful half of our work. But its importance is universally recognized; and there is not, we think, as *unanimous* a verdict in favor of the English Bible—probably because it is a newer branch of seminary discipline, and consequently not so well understood. There is not that universal *feeling of the need* of the English course. Yet, honored fathers of the Board, you and your predecessors have made no mistake in putting the work of the English Bible tantamount in the constitution of this chair. A study of the English Bible is demanded by the needs of our age. Will you hold in mind this proposition: THE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE IS DEMANDED BY THE NEEDS OF THIS AGE? For to certain 'proofs of this assertion I would invite your attention for a few minutes.

1st. Every preacher should have at his command *the contents of the Bible*. He should know its histories—the stories of creation and the fall; of the growing wickedness of man, and of the flood; of renewed haughty rebellion, and the dispersion; of the choice of a people, their development in Egypt, and their mighty deliverance; of the descent of Jehovah at Sinai to make known his law; of Israel's apostasy, and the consequent wanderings in the desert; of their ultimate entrance into Canaan, their mighty conquests, their ever-recurring apostasies again, and those gracious divine deliverances; of their development into a nation, happy, great, and strong, under kings royal indeed; of sins of people and ruler, and of division and internecine war following thereon; of grand prophetic teaching; of noble opportunities anew presented for retrieving their stand; of obliteration—first, of the northern division, and then the southern; of Judah's reestablishment; of its eternal cure of the love of foreign idolatry; of the nation's running to Phariseeism and Sadduceeism, to ritualism and skepticism; of its furnishing a few humble followers of our Lord, but of its rejection and crucifixion of him, the Lord of glory; and of the muttering thunders of the coming storm of God's wrath which are already reverberating in the New Testament.



He should be acquainted with those matchless biographical sketches in which the Scriptures abound—the stories of Enoch and Noah; of Abraham the friend of God, and Isaac, and Jacob, the prince with God; of the wild Esau, as of the worldling Lot; of Joseph, in his sparkling, but haughty, boyhood, in his oppressed and slavish youth, in his incorruptness, distinguished and in great power, in his beautiful forgiveness toward his brethren, in his humble recognition of the hand of God; of Moses, in the rushes, as the petted son by adoption of a queen, in his rash murder of the Egyptian, in Sinai's desert feeding sheep, at the burning bush, as empty of self, therefore capable of being filled with power from on high, before Pharaoh, clad in a majesty that more than matched the king's, in his calmness at the Red Sea, in his superb, heroic readiness to sacrifice himself for his people after the sin of the golden calf, and in his weakness at the waters of Meribah, where he sinned with his lips—the strongest, grandest, humblest man in all Old Testament history; of the general Joshua, and the chieftain Caleb; of Othniel and Achsah, Deborah and Barak, Gideon and Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel, the seer, the judge, the John the Baptist of the coming kingdom; of Saul's noble youth, but decadent manhood; of Jonathan, the lovely and the chivalric; of David, from the sheep-fold to the throne, as a shepherd, a warrior, courtier, outlaw-chief, tribal king, and king of Israel—from that sink of moral iniquity wherein he committed the double sin against his brave Hittite warrior Uriah, and screened uncleanness by murder, to that height of spiritual life wherein he composed the fifty-first Psalm; of Solomon's bright morning, but darkening day. But time would fail us to mention the names of Old Testament worthies—mighty prophets, faithful priests, heroic kings—whose lives the preacher should know as well as he knows his own life—all the light places and all the dark places in those lives. Nor should he know less, but rather the more, of New Testament characters. He should be acquainted with the shaggy prophet of the wilderness in all his power to despise shams, and in the height of his sublime courage for truth, and in his *soaring* humility. He should know Peter in the blaze of his fervor of love, which moves him, as occasion requires, to

put forth "ecstatic ascriptions of adoration and praise, or follow Christ to prison and to death." He should know John in all his power to love and all his power to hate, and in his deep pondering. He should know the many-sided, the versatile Paul—know the history of the man—his weaknesses and meannesses, his strength and grandeur of character, his insufficiency and sufficiency. And unless he does know these things, he can never appreciate the spiritual aspirations, the burning love for Christ, he can never apprehend the spiritual conceptions of Paul, or John, or Peter. He cannot half preach their truths. He should certainly, also, know the biography of Christ—Christ from his marvellous annunciation and miraculous birth, through his sweet boyhood, of which we have at least a glimpse, and his faithful years of service for his folks at home; through his baptism for righteousness' sake, and his mysterious and terrible temptations; through his ministry, in obscurity, in the full blaze of notoriety, and in the full flush of opposition made to him; in the last week of his life, with all his teachings and doings therein, and on the last day and at the last minute; through his resurrection and ascension.

He should follow one and all these characters through their valleys of Baca and Achor and across the slopes of their Delectable Mountains; should become acquainted with every downward step of their misery for, and in, sin, to the very clay of the miry pit, and with every upward step to the height of glory where these servants of God have stood with their feet upon a rock. He should remark and treasure up their deepest experiences that he may know in some degree what he ought to look for in his own and others' hearts and lives.

Above all, he should treasure up the great facts which God has revealed concerning his own character, and the incidents wherein these facts have been revealed; God's power and wisdom and goodness as seen in creation, in every miracle of which we have record, and in that great, complex, but absolutely orderly movement which we call sacred history; God's stern, inflexible justice and loving mercy together brought out on occasion, of the fall in Eden, of the flood, of the dispersion, of the exodus, and of the

conquest of Palestine and throughout Israel's history; God's sleepless loving providence, of universal reach, but manifested specially toward God's people—toward Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their children whom he led as a flock; God's holiness, his entire apartness from sin, his intolerance of sin, brought out by the most magnificent ceremonialism, as by a thousand instances of miraculously expressed hate of sin; God's truth so determining that it was impossible for the Strength of Israel to lie—all these attributes, all these manifestations of God the preacher should be master of.

Further, he should know the essential contents of the Law and the Gospel, and of the individual books of each. Only when he has looked at God, Christ, the sinner, hell, salvation, heaven through the eyes of Moses and David, and of John and Paul, does he see these great and many-sided subjects in their true perspective. And we can never approximate looking through John's eyes until we know the essential contents of John's writings.

And these are but illustrations of the biblical facts which the preacher of our day, who does not know them, needs to know. This need is not, it is true, peculiar to our age. It is a need of every age. There never was a time since the revelation of these facts, nor will there ever be a time, when the preacher can do the work—the present constitution of nature lasting—which God has given him to do, as he should do it, while ignorant of these facts. *Only* in the great facts which reveal God's character and will concerning man do we find the preacher's message as God's herald to man. Only by the study of inspired biographies of men who were sinners, become saints—regenerate, but imperfectly sanctified—rose, struggled, fell, and yet rose again to greater heights, will the preacher learn how to deal with souls in like process of life. For the only absolutely trustworthy experiences,—psychological experiences, spiritual experiences, carnal experiences, of sinner and saint,—are found in inspired facts. Only, also, from the divine philosophy of history embedded in the Bible can he learn to construct a philosophy of the history of his own age. To unlock the mystery of the present and learn how to behave in his own age, the preacher must to the Bible history with the Bible

philosophy thereof. Thus to get his message and learn how to apply it to men the preacher should at least have the great classes of facts of which we have spoken.

That preacher, therefore, in any age, who fails to master the contents of the Bible, in so far as he is not prevented by physical inability, is responsible for a one-sided, dwarfed development—for unused powers, for a pound laid up in a napkin. The preacher is under a moral obligation to master these contents.

Now the contents of this larger sort can be mastered by a study of the English versions. Says Dr. Thomas Chalmers in his lecture, "Advice to Students on the Conduct and Prosecution of their Studies," in which he recommends, as the first study in the order of *importance*, the study of the Scriptures in the vernacular, "Is there such a difference . . . between the common translation and Campbell's *Translation of the Four Gospels*, that, after studying to the uttermost, and drawing the full sense out of first the one and then the other, the variation in the result will be of any more than a small fractional importance to the whole mass of that doctrine and information which can be obtained from either of them? And might not the very same thing be said of the difference between just our common translation and the one which is perhaps awaiting us, after that by the labors of criticism, the *beau-ideal* of a perfect or of a best possible translation has at length been realized?" (*Works*, Vol. IX., p. 24.) Not only can these contents be mastered in the English versions, they can be mastered more perfectly and rapidly there than in the original text. To hold that the work can be done with equal speed from the original texts, is as if one should hold that dogmatic theology could be acquired with the same rapidity from a Latin text as from an English, by one well acquainted with English, but only imperfectly acquainted with the Latin. "There is much," again says Dr. Chalmers to his students, "very much, of biblical learning that I want you to get in English, just as much in fact, as is practicable in English, for the plain reason that it can be got faster that way, and therefore to get it in Greek or Hebrew is to bring upon a number of most useful acquisitions the burden of a most unnecessary servitude. It is a wasteful expenditure of

strength." It is quite as easy to show that such work can by nine-tenths of our students be done with more perfectness from the English Version than from the original texts.

The average college boy remembers comparatively little of the Livy he read in the Latin on yesterday, or of the Horace, or the *De Amicitia*. His attention has been so much occupied with linguistic problems that the facts, the very cream of Horace, or of Livy, or of Cicero have passed away unheeded. The similar thing is true to a greater or less extent of the divinity student, in his use of the original texts. His attention is withdrawn from the matter, the substance, the spirit, and fixed on the mere form. Besides his progress from page to page is so slow that he hardly ever sees a whole story in its completeness, much less a whole book. He fails of that large comprehensive vision which is essential to mastery.

But beyond this, as a rule the mastery of the contents of the Bible, or even their approximate mastery, can *only* be made by the help of the vernacular. Ours is an unusually well-equipped institution for the exegetical study of the Scriptures in the original tongues. Yet in this seminary *much* less than half the chapters of the whole Scriptures can be covered in the Greek and Hebrew. And if the great *terre incognitæ* of Scripture are explored at all, it must be by an English Bible course, or if any considerable portion of them be mastered it must be by such a course. The time of the students as well as that of the professors would allow nothing else.

If there were no other reason then, than to afford an opportunity for and to accomplish a wider acquaintance of this general sort with the Bible, you would have acted *wisely* in the establishment of this chair, since it is to give at least a partial attention to the mastery of the contents of the Bible. But there are other reasons of quite equal moment.

2nd. OUR SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH MUST STUDY BIBLICAL THEOLOGY,—*must study Biblical Theology in the technical sense* of the phrase; and our most valuable text-book for this study is the English Bible.

By biblical theology is meant the historical exhibition of the

religion contained in the canonical books of the Bible, according to its progressive development and the variety of the forms in which it appears.<sup>1</sup>

We have asserted that this science *must* be studied. It matters not that the investigation may result in little that is new, and that we may return from the toil of the investigation with the conviction that, after all, our FATHERS have seen the essential facts and drawn the doctrines thence and stated them in systematic form. It matters not that our dogmatic theology is founded on, moulded by, and filled with a correct biblical theology. Though all this is granted, yet the circumstances of the age make it incumbent on us to study biblical theology.

For this discipline—a good one in itself, the highest form of exegetical work—the one that shows us revelation as a living, moving, growing thing—is receiving almost universal attention. And it is and must ever remain a precondition to an assured personal certainty that one's dogmatic theology is correct.

Let me, in passing, guard against being understood to have a light estimate of the importance of dogmatic theology. Dogmatic theology is the very queen of the sciences. It has ever held the predominant place in theological discipline and will continue to do so in the future. No truth is seen until it is seen in relation to at least the whole body of kindred truths. No truth is known until it is known in system. Dogmatic theology has received, is receiving, and will continue to receive much detraction at the hands of enemies of the truth and *foolish friends* of the truth. Every bulwark against error will receive endless defamation at the hands of errorists, and dogmatic theology in proportion to her importance. But while holding her in this high esteem, we reassert that we cannot have an immediate certainty that our dogma is correct unless we study biblical theology. The reasons, if not already evident, will appear incidentally as we proceed.

Furthermore, it is plain, even to the eyes of him who *willeth not to see*, that *our* dogma is *impugned*—generally *impugned*. The

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Weidner, *Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*.

spirit of this age impugns it. We have pointed out a good quality of this spirit of our age in its practicality, even though that practicalness be of too low a type.

Another good quality of the age is its disposition to inquire into everything—to accept nothing without sufficient reason. But our age, too often, exhibits another quality as unqualifiedly bad as these are good, namely, the disposition to reject the past, as being the past, without examination.

It is an age of grand, of glorious advancement in certain departments of knowledge. Increment after increment of light has been added in rapid succession. Truths whose very existence were unsuspected have been discovered, and have brought with them other worlds of truth. Old theories, old doctrines, honored through a hoary past, have been exploded. New theories, which, if not true, yet approximate more nearly the truth, have been established for the time. Much of this new truth is of very great value. Much of the old theories displaced is now seen to have been of positively hurtful tendency. To illustrate this movement by an instance from the department of medicine: About a score of years ago, Sir James Simpson, the discoverer of chloroform, was the greatest light in the faculty of Edinburgh. He was succeeded by his nephew. A few years later, the latter gentleman was asked by the librarian of the university to go to the library and pick out the books on his subject that were no longer needed. "And," says Professor Drummond, "his reply to the librarian was this: 'Take every book that is more than ten years old, and put it down into the cellar.'"<sup>1</sup> And so in the realm of history, our age has substituted the ingenious guesses of our fathers by facts. It has resurrected the ages long gone by, and made them tell truly the tale of their daily lives, their hopes, despairs, fears, and joys. And the lines along which this increased light has been thrown are not a few. The successes of the age in getting rid of cobwebs and reading "God's thoughts after him," have, by God's good help, been *vast*. But the age's successes have made it mad. It has become proud of its works, and contemptuous of the past. It not only claims the right to examine the past, which is well and

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<sup>1</sup>*The Supreme Gift*, page 44.

good, but it claims the right to reject the past as being the past, and then to examine or not as it chooses. Like Nebuchadnezzar, it looks on the great Babylon which *it* has builded. And, like Nebuchadnezzar, it loses reason. It makes the induction, like a village matron, from a case or two of error in the tenets of the past, that the past is all worthless. If it give an examination to the past at all, that examination is an act of free grace to the past; it is not in any sense its due before rejection. And this Spirit of the Age deals with the Christian religion and with the forms of its doctrinal statements as it deals with other subjects.

We *hear its voice* in our own communion, from persons of some degree of culture, from men and women who read the works of Stanley and Drummond *et id omne genus*. From these persons the voice passes to the great unreading crowds. And from these crowds it comes every now and then—nay, often—to the preacher in distinct articulation: “I have a difficulty. Don’t tell me what the church says, what the standards say; tell me what the Scriptures say. And before you do that, tell me what the Scriptures *are*.” These people are virtually rejecting our standards and our Bible without examination. Pastors tell us that their people are putting such questions.

We hear the voice of the Spirit of the Age, again, in the changing teachings of the churches. We may, indeed, credit these churches with a love for the past—in some cases, with an unworthy, dishonest fight for the past. The time ghost may have a rich gift for some churches of to-day. We pass this. We reassert that his voice is heard in the *changing teachings* of the churches of to-day. The great Cumberland Presbyterian Church has drifted far out toward Socinianism; denied to God the attribute of justice, on the ground that he is possessed of the attribute of mercy; denied the atoning efficacy of Christ’s death. The Northern Methodist Church is driving on in the same direction. The Northern Presbyterian Church has, to say the least, a large minority of Arminians; it has, too, a powerful though small minority of rationalists. That church wishes a new creed. In this they are at one with the Presbyterian churches of England and Scotland. As for the German theologians: through them



the voice of the age speaks most loudly. In a sense this voice may be said to be *theirs* peculiarly. A summary of its teachings through them may engage you for a moment with profit. It is as follows:

1st. "The modern world-philosophy which denies miracle and prophecy and recognizes only a purely historical development of things is assuredly right. In order to win the cultured classes, therefore, Christian dogmas must be modified and concessions must be made.

2nd. "Our view of inspiration must be modified and toned down in view of critical objections. And we must declare that the *Bible is no longer the only source of Christian truth*, that on the contrary, its system of truth is to be based on the Christian consciousness and the Christian certainty of salvation, that, in short, the experience of the believer is to be put in place of the Scriptures.

3rd. "The doctrine of the subjection and bondage of the human will is to be given up. The will is relatively independent and coöperative in conversion which is confused with regeneration.

4th. "Synergism and Pelagianism in some form or other is true.

5th. "Predestination or God's free and gracious choice of sinners unto salvation, is to be given up as a doctrine.

6th. "There is little or no difference between justification and sanctification. Sanctification is a process of unaided human development.

7th. "Salvation, as a whole, is in the main a process of human development."

This summary has been taken with immaterial changes from the article of Dr. A. Zahn in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* of July, 1891, not because it contained anything new, but because it is a statement that must carry credibility with it. Dogmatic theology of to-day thus impugns the dogmatic theology of Calvin which we substantially hold. Shall we not be ready to answer, every man giving a reason of the hope that is in us?

It is still more to the purpose to observe that biblical theology which is widely cultivated, as we have seen, in many quarters, is lifting high its voice in fierce denunciation of our dogmas. Ritschl, the head of the most influential school of biblical theology in

Germany, until his death in 1888, found hardly a grain of truth in our dogma. Take the point of Christology. Ritschl taught that, "inasmuch as Christ's disposition of mind is the same as God's, Christ receives the predicate of deity, by which, however, there is no thought of any constitution of nature, the Scriptures admittedly teaching the contrary" [Z]. Both he and his most celebrated and talented follower, A. Harnack, of Berlin, teach that much of our dogma is nothing in the world but Greek ideas—purely heathen in its origin. There are, thank God, much more worthy presentations of biblical theology. But many even of the more conservative biblical theologians assert that the apparent biblical support for many of our doctrines is only obtained by severing the proof-text from its context and its historical setting, that dogmatic theologians see proofs for their positions in such texts, because they go to the Bible to find such proofs. And with all this clamor around us, with these voices sounding high against us, we should know how to meet worthily these aspersions on our standards.

We cannot, be assured, meet them worthily by holding by prescription the faith of our fathers—by clinging to it as a Mussulman clings to his inherited Mohamedanism, as the heathen Chinese of to-day in the Province of Hunan cleave to their faith out of regard to the past. No, sirs; we can only meet these detractions worthily by planting ourselves on the immovable rock of truth. We must study the biblical theology ourselves. We must raise the questions. Did our fathers really derive their theology from the Bible? Did they get the whole truth and nothing but the truth? What are the Biblical facts and doctrines out of which to construct a theology?

And in this study of biblical theology we must go to the Bible. We are not to go to the works of biblical theology. We are not to go to the works of Ritschl, or Bender, or Kafton, or Häving. We are not to go to the works even of Oehler, or Weiss, or to the compends of Weidner. If we do we will look at facts through their eyes. We will fail to see for ourselves. We will get no more of the needed discipline than by reading the biblical sections in the dogmatics of Hodge, or Dabney, or Shedd. In this age and about these eternally vital matters we want the intuitive certainty that

comes only of a direct, immediate, personal handling of the word itself. We must go to the Bible, and to the English Bible, for reasons evident. The great facts which we wish specially to find are the common, outstanding facts, the facts which no proximately correct version could hide—facts, therefore, which we can get without fail from our versions—facts which the cottage patriarchs of our church have gathered so well from their version as to make of seminary-bred preachers their humble disciples. The mighty work, the limited time, the adequacy of the English Version, all say for the English Version: "It is our text-book."

And to this text-book we must go with a becoming spirit. We are not to go to it to find certain things in it, as dogmatic theologians are often unjustly charged with doing. We are not to go to it with rejection of it as a whole in our hearts, or rejection of any essential contents of it, as Ritschl has done. We are certainly not to approach the book with the denial of all supernatural in it, as Bender is said to have done. We are to go to it to *discover what is there*. We are to take up book after book, observe carefully the cardinal facts and doctrines of religion as developed in the book, note these facts, and at the end of the book reduce the results to fitting order, and see what we have. Thus we proceed from book to book, noting the religious light and life of each age, comparing that light and life with that of preceding ages, and on suitable occasions making comparisons between the results obtained and the doctrines of our standards. And if the student returns from the investigation with a deep certainty that the great doctrines of our church are not supported by brief texts taken out of all relation with their context, but by the very spirit of wide tracts of Scripture; if he sees that whole books of Scripture are just redolent of these doctrines, then he will be able to meet the onslaught of the age as he should. After such a discipline, a man can deal suitably with the troubled members of his flock who are ready to drop the standards. He can distinguish between the truth and the error of his age. He can take the good. He can reject the bad. He can run with his age as far as it moves toward the right. He can resist it in its motions toward the wrong. He is unshaken by rationalistic dogmatism, or by

teachers of a biblical theology which is no biblical theology. He is no longer shut up to prescription, or to being tossed to and fro by the changing winds of the day. He can hold truth because he knows it is true. If of his age, as he should be, he can yet be above his age, *i. e.*, *quoad* religion. He can suitably guide his people in religion. The man, on the other hand, who has not made, in some way, this independent study of the Bible is not the man most needed in our generation. Sooner or later, he will be swept along by the current of the age. Prescription, sooner or later, invariably yields. If he is not a puppet to-day, he will become one to-morrow. Instead of holding his people steadily to the truth, he and they will drift alike before the breeze of the hour. He will be seized by the nearest by-current, and carried into all sorts of ephemeral whirlpools and eddies. He will never be heavy enough to catch the force of the current of the great gulf stream of God's truth, which moves with increasing light throughout the ages.

It is worthy of *special* remark, by the way, that the seminary is the place to get this discipline. There may be a thought in some mind that the future, in the pastor's study, is the time and place for this work. Some one may think: "The student here has not attained the point of view for this work. His acquirements are insufficient." But his attainments *are* sufficient. The facts mainly looked for for the purposes of biblical theology are of the plainer sort, as we have seen. Some one may object that "Time fails one, while at the seminary, for such work." The answer is: If time fails our students here, it will always fail them. They will never have time to investigate whether the theology which they preach is really biblical. The seminary should be a place where truth is searched for, and gripped eternally. Bishop Phillips Brooks, in his *Yale Lectures on Preaching*, draws a painful contrast between the way in which seminary students in some places work and the way in which students attending the professional schools of law and medicine work. The law-student may have loitered in his academical career, likewise the medical student, but in their professional schools they work with intense energy. "Then," says Bishop Brooks, "the work of their life comes into sight before them. It is the way in which a bird, who has been

wheeling vaguely, sees at last its home in the distance, and flies toward it like an arrow." "But shall I say to you," he goes on, "how often I have thought that the very transcendent motives of the young minister's study have a certain tendency to bewilder him, and make his study less faithful than that of men seeking other professions from lower motives? The highest motive often dazzles before it illuminates. "It is one of the ways in which the light within us becomes darkness. I shall never forget my first experience at a divinity school. The first place I was taken to at the seminary was the prayer-meeting; and never shall I lose the impression of the devoutness with which those men prayed and exhorted one another . . . I sat bewildered and ashamed, and went away depressed. On the next day I met some of those same men at a Greek recitation. It would be little to say of some of the devoutest of them that they had not learnt their lessons. Their whole way showed that they never learnt their lessons; that they had not got hold of the first principles of hard, faithful conscientious study. The boiler had no connection with the engine. The devotion did not touch the *work which then and there was the only work for them to do*. By and by I found something of where the steam did escape to. A sort of amateur, premature preaching was much in vogue among us. We were in haste to be at what we called 'our work.' A feeble twilight of the coming ministry we lived in. The people in the neighborhood dubbed us 'parsonettes.' Oh! my fellow students, the special study of theology and all that appertains to it, that is what the preacher must be doing always; but he never can do it afterwards as he can in the blessed days of quiet in Arabia, after Christ has called him and before the apostles have laid their hands upon him." According to your work here you will have a right when you go out hence to speak God's truth with a certainty approaching that of prophets, apostles, our Lord, or you will have no such right, but must speak as the scribes, the tradition of the elders, and wear the faces of shams. Time can be found for the study of biblical theology, one of the most vital needs of the hour, of which if a man is destitute he is adrift, without anchor, rudder or compass.

3rd, ANOTHER CRYING NEED OF OUR AGE IS THAT THE BIBLE SHOULD BE HEARD IN ITS OWN APOLOGY; that it be allowed to make its own defence against the heresies of the day.

It is sometimes said that the best course in apology is a course of quiet, positive teaching of truth. But this position does not seem to be true. We might, perhaps, grant it if we were able to find a sufficiently strong instinct in the student to the truth. But the much boasted hungering for truth supposed to be the possession of every rational soul is mightily counteracted in the minds of most men. There is an inertia, a sloth, a stupidity, a deadness to truth. The majority need, until they get it, regeneration of mind and a constant reawakening and stimulation.

One of the means which may be employed to arouse and to quicken the mind is to confront men with opinions contrary to those which they are accustomed to hear put forth. Let the counter opinion be set forth in all its strength of statement and plausibility of argumentative support. Let the student feel that, like the Indian infant boy in the river, if he will not swim by effort he must die, if he will not think he must go down before error, into error to be covered by it as by drowning waters. When he sees there is thinking to do for every one worthy of the name man, and that every one worthy of the name man must think, then if there is any possibility of the act in him it will show itself. Error serves, should be made to serve, to show the beauty and the value of truth, as darkness shows that of light, and thus wake us to the reception of truth. And, besides this, truth acquired in the face of errors is retained by intellect and heart as a more precious possession. The man who weighs the conflicting opinions, who wrestles with opponents maintaining always fairness and a supreme desire for the truth, goes away with the strength which comes of conflict and with *love* for the truth attained, since love always impinges on the object for which we make outlay of self. The man who in the midst of rampant error holds the truth and sees through the errors, *values* the truth. He will love it with all his strength of manhood and propagate it with virile power. He is like a patriot who has fought for the liberty and happiness of his state. *His* affection for the state is

lasting as life. But he who is not trained to hate error and to fight it is apt to be like the posterity of the patriot, grown easy and careless of his civic rights because he knows nothing of their cost. We may bless the Lord, my brethren, that he gives to the devil and his minions a loose rein, that he forces his church to be a church militant, for such *poor* creatures are we, that were we not forced to fight for his truth we would go to sleep concerning it and *lie in a dead stupor* touching it through the ages. That we may love the truth and hold it and push it, then let us set error over against it.

Furthermore, a course in apology is advantageous in that to forewarn is to forearm. Were a student taught positively the truth in the form held in this seminary and turned loose without an intimation of the phases of opinion he is to meet in the world, he would encounter some very rude shocks, and be put to hurtful and lasting confusion, perhaps. We are not mistaken in teaching the advantage of apology. John was an apologist. Paul was an apologist. And in the records of the life of our Lord more space is taken up in the telling of his controversies than in narrating any other kind of his teachings. These great teachers made no mistake. They did the wise thing and showed all subsequent teachers what they ought to do.

Now the best text-book on biblical apologies is the Bible itself. He was no fool who when asked to recommend that book which contained the ablest defense of the Bible, recommended "the *Bible itself*." He who has lived with one of our canonical writers, with John for example, until he really knows what John has said in his book, has appreciatively mastered the book *memoriter* say, knows that the spirit of the book is divine. And when he leaves for a time this communion with God's prophet, or God's Spirit, who speaks through his prophet, leaves that for the ordinary talk of men, he knows that the book is as high above man as heaven is high above earth. Let the truth have an opportunity then to vindicate itself by opposing constantly the error correspondent to the truth of any given passage, and the vindication will be perfect; *e. g.*, let the student come to the class with John's treatment of the nature of our Lord, as set forth in the preface to

John's Gospel, thoroughly mastered and well in mind. Ritschl's doctrine as to our Lord's nature, if clearly set forth, heighten the student's appreciation of the fact of our Lord's true divinity and deity, and will serve to receive itself an absolute refutation. And there are *multitudes* of errors, which current to-day, were current also in the time of apostle and prophet, and received a complete and definitive refutation at the hands of said apostles and prophets. Some of these refutations are recorded in the Bible. For example, men raise to-day with all the swelling pride of paternity the question: "What is to be the form of the absolute religion?" "What is to be the absolute religion?" But this question was asked in the Apostle Paul's day, and Paul answered it. He says and proves at length that the ultimate religion is to be his gospel of Jesus Christ. See the pastoral epistles. To the Bible then for its own defence.

Here, too, the English Version is the Bible to be used, since with it one may get a larger view of Scripture truth and a clearer one. That the Bible's own apology for itself may be appreciated it is exceedingly important to know a large part, if possible, all, of the Bible. Says Oehler,<sup>1</sup> "It is true of every intellectual product, that it cannot be rightly esteemed by those who concern themselves only with its outer features, or with individual fragments of it; and of the Bible this is peculiarly true. What is here unfolded is one great economy of salvation—*unum continuum systema*, as Bengel puts it—an organism of divine deeds and testimonies which beginning in Genesis with the creation, advances progressively to its completion in the person and work of Christ, and shall find its close in the new heaven and the new earth predicted in the Apocalypse; and only in connection with this whole can details be rightly estimated. He who cannot apprehend the" [Bible] "Old Testament in its historical context may produce in detail much that is valuable and worth knowing, but he lacks the right key to its meaning; . . . then he easily stops short at the puzzles which lie everywhere on the surface, . . . and from them he condemns the whole." To get even an approximate mastery of the whole Bible and thus allow the Bible to apologize for itself, we must use

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<sup>1</sup> *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. I., page 2.



our versions, therefore. Master the whole Bible thus, and it will be seen that the work of the destructive critics must be, in order to their success, of a magnitude more than infinite.

Let us remark, to prevent misapprehension, that in all that has been said concerning the importance of the English Bible study no disparagement is intended of the other exegetical chairs. We yield to none in our appreciation of their importance. And we shall do all in our power to lead the student to increased dissatisfaction with the exclusive study of any mere version. But there is a vast deal of work that for lack of time cannot be done by those chairs, and which may be done in part by the one arm of the fifth professorship. This work we have tried to indicate as to kind, and to its value. In these several three ways the English Bible course could be employed with great profit. Such a discipline, faithfully pursued, would add greatly to the effective equipment of men for the ministry.

In conclusion, we observe, that it is entirely practicable to make a unity of this threefold discipline. That unity is obtained by making biblical theology the paramount discipline and the mastery of the contents and the apologetic work subsidiary. The mastery of the contents, in itself considered of almost measureless importance to the preacher, is the necessary precondition to the proper study of the facts of doctrine and its development; while, on the other hand, the presentation of error is an aid to the proper comprehension of the doctrines of the truth.

Somewhat less ground can be covered by this triple study than by but one kind of it. But there is compensation in the greater worth of results obtained. Nor do I see any sufficient reason why we may not hope, in sessions not far distant, to cover a vast tract of Scripture in this thorough manner. In a school of young ministers, a school which should rank as high as any university in the land for the kind and amount of work done in it, may we not hope to lay aside in some of the classes all kindergarten methods and even common-school pedagogics? May we not hope that these gentlemen, conscientious and diligent,—moved by the greatness of their work, the shepherdship of God's people,—will do the more elementary work with but little assist-

ance on the part of the teacher, prepare *themselves on the contents of a section* of the Scriptures, and help themselves by the aid of hand-books on geography and brief commentaries, recommended for the purpose, to a general understanding of its matters of archæology and geography? Our knowledge of past and present classes in the seminary induces us to believe that such is not a delusive hope. Let the classes come habitually to the class-room full of these contents, so that at the most the professor need only satisfy himself of the fact by a brief examination thereon. Let them do that, and the time in the lecture-room can be devoted to the development of the biblical theology and the needed apologies, and thus rapid progress may be made, great tracts of Scripture can be covered.

I would now reassert, honored sirs, that you have done wisely and well in establishing a department of English Bible study, wisely and well in defining it more particularly as a course of biblical theology. The step was urgently demanded by the needs of the age—the need of a knowledge of Bible facts, for the facts as pastoral provender, but with special reference to biblical theology, a sore need, and the need of Bible apologies. And may the God that created the chair, through you his instruments, bless the work of his and your hands and make it a means for the furtherance, powerfully, of the knowledge of the glory of his rich grace, and to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be everlasting praise.

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