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I. THE NEGRO IN ECCLESIASTICAL RELATIONS.

THE negro question, as it is called, presents one of the most perplexing problems of our age. Every phase of it, social, political, and ecclesiastical, involves difficulties sufficient to tax the wisdom and philanthropy of the most enlightened. The difficulty is increased by the malign influence of sectionalism. Both sections of our common country essay the attempt, and each embarrasses the other. The North would speedily settle it were it not for the South; and the South would have settled it long ago but for the North. The conscientious convictions of each party stand in the way of the best intentions of the other, so that the well meant efforts of both fail, to the scandal of religion and the sorrow of philanthropy. Two opposing policies are presented by the two sections. This want of harmony was at first explained and excused by the heat of passion lingering like smoke around the recent battle fields, and there was confident prophecy of its speedy disappearance. The passions of war, however, have long since subsided, and the hostiles have "shaken hands across the bloody chasm," and the lines of opposition, like those of breastwork and battle-field, have been long ago obliterated, while this conflict still rages. These policies have confronted each other now for a quarter of a century, and they are as unreconciled if not as irreconcilable in 1889 as in 1865. There is something very significant in this.

Moreover, whatever suggestion is offered by either fails of influence on the other, each being discounted—the South by the North upon the allegation of prejudice, the North by the South upon that of ignorance.

gard unification as our great mission, we will reduce the scope of the symbols to the barest necessities of Scripture truth. But if our first duty is to exhibit the whole truth of God, that Confession will be as complete as possible, and will contain truths denied by many evangelical bodies, thus furnishing a basis of contrast rather than of unity.

Upon these questions there is in the church no formulated consensus, and variations abound; still, I believe the weight of opinion is towards the first alternative in each of the three cases, and that the desiderata in a symbol of doctrine, are: an expression of present faith, an authoritative guide, and an exhibit approximately complete of the revealed truth of God.

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### A PLEA FOR BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.

IT is a disputed question whether there is such a thing as progress in theology. Some theologians claim that revelation, as a historical process, having been completed, and the doctrines of Christianity having crystallized in creeds, henceforth the office of theology is to expound and defend those truths which have been defined by the church. Fresh light on the great doctrines of sin and grace and redemption is not to be expected. Our views may be clarified, our doctrines set in better order, and some further logical consequences may be drawn from them; but the work of the theologian is essentially conservative, not aggressive; it is expository of received doctrine, not inventive or constructive, so far as new materials are to be dealt with. Others of a more advanced school demand greater liberty of thought, and claim that new factors should be admitted into the science of theology. The Christian consciousness, the spirit of the age, the enlightened reason, must have their place and their authority in constructing a system of theology.

Between the two extreme positions is there no middle ground? The great body of evangelical churches holds that the Scriptures contain the only and the complete revelation of God. Nothing is to be added, nothing to be taken away, but the Scriptures constitute the norm by which all theories, all doctrines, all systems are to be tested.

The duty of carefully studying the Holy Scriptures becomes then all the more necessary. The Bible being the word of God, is not to be overlaid by any system of scholastic theology, nor obscured by any pre-conceived opinions of theologians. No human creed, however ancient, no opinion of men upon religious truths, however widely spread,

no traditional interpretation, however hallowed by association, can claim immunity from examination and testing by the Scriptures, nor from re-adjustment, if necessary, in consequence of clearer light derived from the holy oracles. There is little danger that any serious revolution will be effected by this process. The great doctrines of Christianity stand out so clearly on the page of Scripture that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. But for the thorough knowledge required by the minister of the word a more careful and comprehensive study of the Scriptures is necessary. In point of fact, few men engaged in the active work of the ministry find time, or *take* time, for any thorough study of all the books of the Bible. They may read more or less systematic or practical theology; they may devote some time to the study of certain passages of Scripture in preparing their sermons, but they shrink from the labor of undertaking a detailed survey of the whole Canon.

There would seem to be a place in theological study for that department or "discipline" known as Biblical Theology. It is strange what slight knowledge of the meaning of this title is exhibited by many clergymen. They do not seem to understand what is meant by "Biblical Theology," as distinguished from Systematic, or better, Dogmatic Theology. The name is sometimes rejected, as if it implied that Systematic Theology is not biblical, or as if Biblical Theology attempts to supersede Systematic Theology altogether. Neither of these is the case.

The object of this paper is to answer briefly the questions, What is Biblical Theology? what is its value in theological education? what is its relation to systematic theology?

I. Biblical Theology is the historic presentation of the religious teachings of the Bible, as these teachings have been uttered and developed by the writers of Holy Scripture, during the entire progress of revelation. Or, to give the exact definition of some noted writers in this department: According to Oehler (*Theologie des Alten Testaments*), "The theology of the Old Testament is the historico-genetic delineation of the religion contained in the canonical writings of the Old Testament." According to Weiss (*Lehrbuch der Biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments*), "The Biblical Theology of the New Testament is the scientific delineation of the religious ideas and doctrines contained in the New Testament."

Let not the Teutophobist start back in alarm at the mention of these German theologians. We will go on to examine the real signifi-

cance of these definitions, and seek to justify the use of this theological discipline.

Biblical Theology is the connecting link between Biblical Exegesis and Historical Theology. The first task of the student of Scripture, after having settled the questions as to the canonicity, genuineness and authenticity of the writings, is to ascertain what the writers mean, to interpret the various books of the Bible by the help of lexicography, grammar and archæology. To know the language of the writers well, and to have a clear conception of the scope and connection of each passage, is indispensable. Then follows the gathering up of all these separate phrases and ideas into unity. After studying one or all of the Pauline epistles, we cannot avoid attempting to construct a Pauline theology. Paul has certain leading doctrines, thoughts and expressions, which mark him out distinctly. How far may these be reduced to a system and fitted compactly and coherently together? Why is it less important for the minister to know just what was Paul's view of the atonement than to know what was the view of Anselm or Abelard or Calvin? Why should he not wish to have as clear a conception of the distinctive teachings of John and Peter as he has of the differences between Rome, Luther and Zuingli, as to the Lord's Supper? If it is essential to thoroughness in Systematic Theology to know something (the more the better) of the history of doctrine and of the gradual embodying of the church's views of truth in certain formulas, definitions and creeds, it would certainly appear necessary to have the knowledge of this movement most clearly at the very beginning of all church history. Much time is given to discussing the terms "homousion," "trinity," "filioque," "vicarious," and others, none of which is found in the Bible, but a corresponding fulness of treatment in regard to "the kingdom of heaven," the "parousia," "the Son of man," and other similar biblical expressions is often looked for in vain in Systematic Divinity.

It cannot be denied that there are characteristic differences in the various books of the Bible. In the Old Testament, the doctrines of immortality and of the resurrection are expressed much more clearly in the later books than in the earlier. The problem of the sufferings of the righteous looms up in sombre but magnificent outlines in the Psalms of Asaph, the Book of Job, and some of the Prophets. The Messianic idea is a constant growth, and only the historical tracing out of its development will bring light to the student. Of course the arrangement and disposition of the materials out of which Biblical Theology is to be

constructed may bring about somewhat different views. The questions of age and priority must be settled, as far as possible, by means of Biblical Introduction. He who adheres to the marginal statement of the English Version, that "Moses is thought to have wrote the Book of Job whilst among the Midianites, B. C. 1520," will not be prepared to interpret that book in accordance with the historical setting given to it by Prof. Davidson, of Edinburgh, in his valuable commentary. He regards it as a reflection of the terrible fate of Judah, the actual struggle of a pious heart in contemplating such evils as those set forth in the pathetic language of Lamentations:

"Behind the author's time there probably lay some great public calamity, which reduced multitudes of men to a wretchedness more unendurable than death, and forced the questions of evil and the righteousness of God upon men's minds with an urgency that could not be resisted. Such a calamity could be nothing short of deportation or exile."

II. As one of the chief advantages of Biblical Theology we may mention the fact that it necessitates a more careful study of the questions of Biblical Introduction than is usually made by ministers. Whether a book is early or late, at what precise period a prophet lived, what was the actual condition of things in the history of the church of God when a certain writing was composed, are questions which seldom trouble most ministers. If the wording of a text seems to fit in well with the subject under discussion, if it rounds off a period smoothly, and if it appears to clinch the argument with Scripture, it is sometimes used with little care to ascertain its true interpretation. Typological interpretation is particularly given to this lax use of Scripture, and, indeed, it is sometimes dignified by the name of "the deeper and more spiritual interpretation."

Biblical Theology is not only valuable as leading to a historical study of the doctrines of Scripture, and to the method of tracing out step by step the unfolding of a great spiritual truth, but it is even more important as tending to the study of the whole Bible. We are inclined to have certain writings or passages with which we are quite familiar, because they support our own system of theology. These we study carefully, to the neglect of other parts of the Scriptures. No Presbyterian is apt to forget Romans viii.; no Baptist, Romans vi.; no Arminian, Hebrews vi. Thus a portion of the Bible may be carefully studied and used as a quarry from which to dig "proof-texts," while other parts of Scripture are neglected. But the biblical theologian must take into account the whole of each writing, and must fit each

part of it into its proper place in the writer's scheme. Instead of selecting certain texts and reading their meaning into others which seem to disagree with them, he must give each sentence its proper force, having regard to nothing but ascertaining the meaning of the writer.

Under what different aspects the same great truths of Christianity may be considered! How important it is to gain a clear knowledge of the individuality of each sacred writer, and to have a firm grasp on the principles advanced by him. Thus the Epistle of James expresses itself distinctly and clearly; but a vast amount of labor has been given to the discussion of the relation between the use of the word 'justify' by James, and by Paul. The fact that this leading Pauline expression does not once occur in the writings of John, (Revelation xxii. 11, reading *δικαιοσύνην ποιησάτω*, according to correct texts,) will cause a deeper investigation of John's view of faith as related to salvation. So in the topical treatment of any subject, the biblical method would require a careful tracing out of every passage bearing on it, in chronological order if possible. Then all the light thus obtained would be gathered up and presented without the omission of anything bearing upon it in the Bible.

In the discussion of the miracles and the relation of miracles to nature, carried on within and without the pages of the PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY, in 1888, one of the most remarkable features of the discussion to a biblico-theological student was the fact that nowhere was the attempt made to get a clear conception of the views of "nature," and the "natural" as held by the scriptural writers. In attempting to define our own conceptions of the relations of the Divine Being to his works, it would certainly seem desirable to inquire how far the modern view of the *κόσμος* differs from that of the inspired writers. Very little research is required to show that the distinction which we make between the natural and the supernatural was not present to the mind of the old Hebrew writers, so far at least as the action of elemental laws and forces is conceived. "He looketh on the earth and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills and they smoke." "The God of glory thundereth; the Lord is upon many waters; the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars, yea the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon." "He maketh winds his messengers, his ministers a flaming fire." To the old Hebrew writers there were no "second causes," no "laws of nature," but God was the agent in all events, natural or supernatural. Much of what we moderns write about law, and force, and nature,

would be without meaning for them. Herein lies the chief good of Biblical Theology. It leads to a careful study of biblical phrases and definitions, as these are given by the Scriptures themselves. Any difference or peculiarity in the phraseology of the various biblical writers is thus made apparent and becomes familiar. So, too, in each period of history, the prevailing religious ideas are brought out and become associated with that particular epoch.

But it may be said that such a method leads to too much division of the one system of truth contained in the Scriptures. Instead of clearing up our views of truth, it may tend only to confuse them, and to substitute a mass of varying ideas for one compact system. This is not, however, the effect of this method of study. We do indeed learn to be cautious in making "the system of doctrine" a norm by which to interpret all passages of the Scripture. Instead of the view, so often caught up in theological schools, that "the system" is something fixed, definite, and sharply defined, we learn that while the great fundamental truths of Christianity are as clearly seen as the primary colors in the rainbow, like those colors they are not sharply marked off from each other, but blend with each other by soft and imperceptible gradations. Theology, anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology are convenient divisions for the "*loci communes*" of Dogmatics; but many parts of Scripture may be classed under several divisions, and the truths contained under one head cannot be understood out of their true relation to all others. Thus the very diversity of biblical teaching brings us at last to a deeper and more satisfying view of the unity of the Scriptures. Not a mere formal and logical unity always, but the unity of a common spiritual life, springing from one indwelling and sanctifying Spirit, given through one Redeemer. The life may be more or less highly developed, it may exist under different economies, it may express itself in different periods in slightly differing phraseology; but the beating of the heart, the sinking or soaring of the spirit, the upward tendency of soul, the shrinking from sin, the aspiration for closer communion with God, the only source of truth and good and life, are the characteristics of souls born "not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Another great advantage of Biblical Theology is its freshness, and its tendency to arouse an enthusiastic interest in studying the Scriptures themselves. It may not be "progress in theology," but it is certainly a variation from the repetition of the same themes by systematic theologians. A new and wonderful interest is given to the study of

the Bible, when the attempt is made to gain a broad and comprehensive view of the teachings and the religious life of each period, and of each great religious teacher. The student is the more encouraged to proceed with this work, because he has in his hands the entire material for the mastery of this subject. To be a thorough student of historical theology, he must accumulate a number of books of the patristic, scholastic and reforming periods of church history; for the dabbling in "hand-books" will never make a man master of any subject. Treatises on Biblical Theology we should study, but they all come back to the Scriptures themselves for confirmation or refutation.

It is quite possible for the student to construct for himself, a full summary of the leading doctrines of Peter, or of John, or of the Epistle to the Hebrews. One biblical writer may become the centre of patient, thorough study, the language, the thoughts, the intention, all being carefully examined and then compared with the other writers who touch on the same great themes. Finally, all the varied teachings are to be gathered up into a compact mass, comprehending the "fundamentals" of the Bible itself. What a quarry for students has Cremer opened in his "Biblico-theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek;" and how much clearer and deeper is the impression made by a great biblical word, when we have traced it back through its use in the Old Testament Hebrew and the Septuagint Greek up to the full development which it has obtained in the New Testament writings!

Enough has been written to show what a fresh and fertile field lies open here for diligent workers. How much interest is felt in this department of theology may be seen by the number of modern books on theology which are being written directly under the influence of biblico-theological training. Exposition itself is quite as largely indebted to it for breadth as Biblical Theology is indebted to Exegesis for accuracy of treatment.

III. The last point to be briefly considered is, What relation does this department of theology bear to Dogmatics? Is Dogmatic Theology to be discarded or neglected for this younger rival? Not at all. If Biblical Theology is necessarily limited to the religious truths contained within the canonical books, no one can gain a knowledge of theology who does not take into account the whole course of its development down to the present age. Many of our theological terms are not contained in the Bible, but they justify themselves as good definitions of truths which are biblical. "Incarnation," "trinity," "sacrament," "regeneration" (in our sense), and other such terms, are not biblical

terms; but they are as necessary and as well understood as those which are found in Scripture, such as "holiness," "justification," and "redemption." The conflicts of the church with heresy, with error, and with various opinions within her pale, have tended to bring out clear definitions and sharp distinctions against partial views. No theologian can attain to clear and right thinking who does not group all these opinions around one central system, and grasp them all, as he sees them related to the fundamental doctrines of the word of God.

Systematic Theology is, and always must be, an essential part of theological education. On this point we cannot find a clearer statement than that made by the late Dr. A. A. Hodge: "It has been an immense loss to Systematic Theology that its cultivators have so long neglected Biblical Theology. The historical method, and the gradual communication and variant human forms in which revelation has been given, are not of interest merely as matters of fact, but as such they are of prime importance to the adequate interpretation of the inspired text, and to the understanding of the mind of God in the entire scheme. The axiom of the systematic theologian is certainly true, that the whole must interpret the parts; but the axiom of the biblical theologian is no less true, that the whole cannot be adequately understood until all the parts have been thoroughly studied in their historical forms, just as they have come to us from the hand of God."—*Presbyterian Review*, Vol. VI., p. 170.

There may be little hope of anything being accomplished in our Southern seminaries for the study of Biblical Theology. But Southern students are not now being trained exclusively in our own institutions, and many of them have come and are now coming under the influence of this theological discipline. Moreover, each minister has the opportunity of pursuing this branch of theology for himself, as many of the best works of the German writers in this department are accessible in English translations for those who do not know German. The Scotch writers show the inspiring effect of Biblical Theology in their later treatises. The writings of Candlish, Smeaton, A. B. Davidson, Marcus Dods, and A. B. Bruce, are all saturated with its spirit. It will be a decided gain for American theology when fresh and scholarly treatises shall emanate from our own writers, based on impartial and independent investigations, conducted in the method and spirit of a pure Biblical Theology.