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FORTY YEARS OF NEW TESTAMENT RESEARCH.

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The forty years that have elapsed since the founding of the UNION SEMINARY REVIEW have been a period of such activity in the field of New Testament research that even the barest cataloguing of what has been done would exceed the limits of the present article. The most that we can possibly attempt here is a brief characterization of certain tendencies that have been at work.

In the field of textual criticism, there has been tireless activity. The really decisive labors, it is true, were performed prior to 1888; for by the researches of Tischendorf, Tregelles and others the principal documentary materials of textual criticism were made available; and the epoch-making edition of Westcott and Hort, which appeared in 1881, established on a firm foundation the principles of the science and the methods of its application to the New Testament. Nevertheless, there has been work in plenty for more recent scholars to do. No new critical apparatus has, indeed, succeeded in taking the place of Tischendorf's monumental eighth edition: for von Soden's apparatus, despite its undoubted value, suffers from an unsatisfactory method of presentation and is generally felt not really to meet the need; while Casper René Gregory, who might well have accomplished what is required, met an untimely end in the Great War. But if a satisfactory critical apparatus is still lacking, the materials for its production are being collected with an ever-increasing fulness. Best known,

and perhaps most important, of the manuscripts that have been discovered since 1888, is the famous "Sinaitic Syriac" manuscript of the Gospels, discovered by Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Lewis in 1892; but many other finds, and the collation of manuscripts already known, have greatly enriched the documentary materials which present-day textual critics can use. As for the principles of textual criticism, as distinguished from the materials, the conclusions of Westcott and Hort have by no means been accepted everywhere without question. A somewhat more favorable attitude toward the so-called "Western text" has often taken the place of the almost wholesale rejection which the Western readings received at the hands of the great British editors; and the origin of the so-called "Neutral text" has often been found not in a merely naïve and mechanical process of transmission from the autographs, but in a definite recension. On the whole, however, it may probably be said that so far as the actual reconstruction of the New Testament text is concerned, recent developments are not for the most part revolutionary: the text of von Soden, for example, despite peculiarities here and there, is not so very diverse from that of Westcott and Hort; and in general, the high estimate placed by Westcott and Hort upon the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus has been vindicated by recent research.

The study of the language of the New Testament has received an important impetus from the discovery of the non-literary papyri. Formerly the Greek language in the Hellenistic age was known for the most part only from the books of the period; but during the past twenty-five or thirty years there have been turning up in Egypt great quantities of private and official documents of various kinds, which are written in the colloquial, as distinguished from the literary, form of the Koiné. The similarities between the language of the New Testament and that of these non-literary documents have shown with increasing clearness that the New Testament is not written in a special Jewish-Greek dialect, but in the living world-language of the Hellenistic age as distinguished from the "literary" language of the period, which is marred by artifi-

cial imitation of classical models. Enthusiasm for the new materials of study has no doubt led sometimes to exaggerations: the Semitic influence upon the Greek of the New Testament is no doubt greater than Deissmann, for example, is willing to admit; and the fact that the New Testament books are not written in the artificial "literary" Greek of the period does not mean that they are not in a high sense literary in purpose and even in form; the Epistles of Paul, for example, were not intended merely to be read once and then thrown away, as is the case with the private letters that have turned up on Egyptian rubbish-heaps, but are, though arising out of special circumstances, epistles written in the plenitude of apostolic authority for the edification of the Church of God.

Despite such cautions, however, the new materials for the study of the Koiné are exceedingly interesting, and deserve the careful attention which has been paid to them by philologists of the present time. They have not yet been made fully available for New Testament study in any comprehensive lexical work; and the admirable lexicon which Thayer made in 1885 on the basis of Wilke-Grimm remains to this day the best lexicon of New Testament Greek. But the labors of Milligan and Moulton and others have provided an increasing mass of comparative material for the new lexicon whenever it may be produced. In the grammatical sphere, important work has been done, with use of the new sources of information, by Radermacher in Germany, by J. H. Moulton in Great Britain, and by A. T. Robertson in America.

In the sphere of literary criticism, there has been to some extent a tendency to retain traditional views even among those who reject the supernaturalistic account which the New Testament gives of the origin of the Christian religion. Seven of the Pauline Epistles are admitted to be genuine by all except a few uninfluential extremists; and among the disputed epistles not only Colossians, but also II Thessalonians and Ephesians, are on the whole probably gaining in favor. With regard to the Pastoral Epistles the issue is more clearly drawn; the genuineness of those epistles is scarcely accepted by any except those who are in general favorable to early Christian

tradition and to the supernatural origin of Christianity. In Gospel criticism, the Johannine authorship of the Fourth Gospel is of course rejected generally by those scholars who represent the dominant naturalistic point of view; and the avidity with which the exceedingly feeble and ambiguous indications of an early death of the son of Zebedee based on the de Boor fragment have been seized upon by present-day writers at the expense of the strong tradition as to the Ephesian residence of the Apostle constitutes one of the least glorious chapters in the history of modern scholarship. As for the Synoptics, the "two-document theory" still enjoys general favor, with "proto-Luke" hypotheses or the like providing subjects of eager debate. It is generally admitted, however, that the modern solution of the Synoptic problem cannot in itself lead to the desired establishment of the facts about a non-miraculous Jesus; since the supposed legendary accretions must at least already have found a place in the two chief sources upon which our Gospels of Matthew and Luke are rightly or wrongly supposed to be based. It becomes necessary, therefore, to penetrate behind these sources to the materials upon which they in turn may be supposed to be based. An attempt is being made in this direction by the *Formgeschichte* of Bultmann and Dibelius. The ultimate units of the tradition embodied in our Synoptic Gospels, says Dibelius, were not extended narratives or extended presentations of Jesus' teaching, but detached anecdotes or the like. Such sub-literary bits of tradition or legend follow, it is supposed, certain laws that govern their form; by the establishment of those laws the materials embodied in our Gospels may be classified and what is original or early may be freed of later accretions. The advocates of this method of investigation, if we may take Dibelius as their representative, seem to have little hope of arriving at the facts about the real Jesus; because a bit of tradition is early and conforms to the laws governing the class to which it belongs, we must not, according to these scholars, jump to the conclusion that it is historical; in the earliest period, Dibelius supposes, the disciples had such an immediate expectation of the second coming of Christ and the end of the age that they had

no motive for committing to writing what they had seen and heard concerning Jesus. Thus this latest method of investigating the Gospel materials is made the instrument of a far-reaching skepticism. Certainly the arbitrariness of the method seems rather apparent; and the thesis that at the beginning the expectation of the Parousia was so intense as to destroy in the disciples an historical interest with respect to Jesus seems to be assumed rather than proved.

As over against such skepticism with regard to the ultimate sources of information is to be put the "return to tradition" which has appeared here and there with respect to the Lucan writings. A. von Harnack, for example, has in a series of important monographs argued in defense of the traditional view as to the authorship of Luke-Acts; the double work, he supposes, was really written by Luke the physician, a companion of Paul. The same opinion is also held by the distinguished historian, Eduard Meyer, and by a number of other scholars who, like Harnack and Meyer, are as far as possible from accepting the supernaturalistic account of the origin of Christianity which the Lucan writings contain. Certainly the conclusion of these scholars with regard to the question of authorship stands in sharp antinomy with their rejection of the supernatural; and it is no wonder that the majority of those who reject the supernatural content of Luke-Acts still deny that it could have been written by a man who stood so close to the events as did Luke the companion of Paul. But just because the naturalistic presuppositions of Harnack and Eduard Meyer are so contrary to the Lucan authorship of the books, their acceptance of that view of the authorship may help to show how strong is the evidence for it in the sphere of literary criticism.

If we turn now from such questions of New Testament introduction to the central historical problem of the origin of Christianity, we find that that problem has in recent years often been approached through a consideration of the Apostle Paul. The genuineness of the major Epistles of Paul is recognized by all historians worthy of serious consideration; we have in these Epistles, therefore, a fixed starting-point in all con-

troversy. There is also a certain measure of agreement regarding the contents of the Epistles; the religion of Paul, which the Epistles attest, is a definite historical phenomenon about the character of which agreement is attainable even by those whose own views about religion are as diverse as possible. The religion of Paul was plainly a religion of redemption: Jesus of Nazareth, according to Paul, was a heavenly being who came voluntarily to earth for the salvation of men, accomplished deliverance by His death and resurrection, and is the object of religious faith for all those who belong to Him. How did this religion of Paul arise; and in particular how arose the view regarding Jesus of Nazareth upon which it was based?

This question has been answered by historians who proceed from a Ritschlian background by means of the familiar distinction between religion and theology; Paul's religion, they have maintained, was derived from Jesus, but his theology was the expression of that religion in the (now obsolete) forms of thought that were proper to that age. Jesus, according to the Ritschlian historians, did not work miracles, and did not transcend the limits of humanity. He did not, moreover, present Himself as the object of faith, but rather sought to lead men to have faith in God like the faith which He Himself had. His disciples caught from Him the contagion of His filial piety, and Paul in turn caught the same contagion from them. But Paul was obliged to express his debt to Jesus in a doctrine of redemption and of Jesus' own person which was derived from sources with which Jesus Himself had little or nothing to do. Thus in the depths of his religious experience, according to the Ritschlian historians, Paul was a true disciple of Jesus, but his theology marks a serious decline from the pure gospel of divine fatherhood which Jesus Himself preached.

This solution of the problem was attacked by W. Wrede in an important little book on Paul which appeared in 1904. Religion and theology in Paul, Wrede observed, belong together; it is not in connection with any mere following of Jesus' example or obeying of Jesus' commands, but in connection with the doctrine of redemption that Paul's religious life

runs full and free. But since, according to Wrede, we cannot possibly suppose that there ever existed upon this earth a supernatural Redeemer such as Paul supposed Jesus to have been, Paul's knowledge of the real, purely human Jesus must have been very slight; and the whole edifice of the historic Church, being based so largely upon Paul, cannot be based upon Jesus. Thus, according to the logic of Wrede's view, Paul rather than Jesus was the true founder of the Christian religion as it has always been known through all the history of the Christian Church.

But if the religion of Paul was not derived from Jesus, whence was it derived? Here opinions diverged. Wrede himself supposed that Paulinism was derived from the pre-Christian Jewish doctrine of the heavenly Messiah, such as it is attested to us, for example, by the Ethiopic Book of Enoch. But the dominant tendency is to have recourse rather to the syncretism of the Graeco-Roman world. Thus the essentials of Paulinism, it is supposed, including Paul's view of Jesus, were derived not from pre-Christian Judaism, but from the pagan religion of that day.

Was Wrede right as over against the older "Liberalism"? The true answer is that he was both right and wrong. He was right in holding that Paul's religion was not derived from the purely human Jesus of modern naturalistic reconstruction; but he was wrong in holding that such a purely human Jesus was the Jesus who actually lived in Palestine and died upon the cross. Paul's religion was based upon the historic Jesus—about that the "Liberal" opponents of Wrede's radicalism were right—but the historic Jesus was not the mere teacher of righteousness reconstructed by modern historians, but the divine Redeemer whom the Epistles of Paul presuppose.

Such a solution of the problem would seem to lie ready to hand. But it involves of course an acceptance of the supernatural, and that stupendous step modern naturalistic historians are not willing to take. Thus the "quest of the historical Jesus" goes busily on.

That quest has thus far resulted in failure. Twenty or thirty years ago it was indeed thought by many to be over.

The "Liberal" historians were engaged in presenting the "results" of modern criticism in the form of more or less elaborate biographies of the great prophet of Nazareth who proclaimed the fatherhood of God. Earnest efforts were made to make of that great prophet a living figure on the pages of history; vigorous attempts were made to exhibit as conceivable the facts of His inner life. At last, it was thought, the unfortunate dogmatic accretions had been removed from the figure of Jesus; now at length we had found in Jesus no cold abstraction, no mythical second Person of a metaphysical Trinity, but a true man, whom, without theology or metaphysics, we could reverence and love.

But alas for human hopes! The critical principles which had removed the supposed theological accretions from the Gospel picture were found to attack much of what had been supposed to stand firm; and the purely human Jesus was found to contain at the very centre of His being a psychological anomaly due to His lofty claims. Vain have been the efforts made by adherents of the older Liberalism to check the progress of a skepticism only too clearly involved in the principles with which that older Liberalism went to work. Actual denial of the historicity of Jesus has indeed met little favor; but what sort of person Jesus really was must, we are told, remain hidden from the gaze of modern men. Thus Rudolf Bultmann, for example, despairs of producing anything like a biography of Jesus or of penetrating to the facts of His inner life. A comparison of Bultmann's little book on "Jesus", with the popular presentations of twenty years ago, will well serve to indicate the trend of the times. Gone is the enthusiasm with which the Jesus of naturalistic reconstruction was held up to the affection and the emulation of men. In popular preaching in America, indeed, that Jesus still holds sway—that Jesus who was "God" simply because He was true man, that Jesus who can be called not "the Lord" but "the Master", that optimistic proclaimer of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. But among scholars such a figure is with greater and greater thoroughness being erased from the pages of history. Now that the supernatural Jesus of the New

Testament has so widely been given up, modern historians despair of any certainty as to what sort of figure is to be put in His place. It is perhaps hardly too much to say that the last forty years in New Testament research have witnessed the rise and fall of "the Liberal Jesus".

The weariness of approaching bankruptcy seems to have fallen, then, upon the modern investigation of the life of Christ and of the beginnings of Christianity. Twenty-five or thirty years ago there was an influx of new enthusiasm in the rise of the so-called "history-of-religion" school. The method of comparative religion, which had previously been practiced in the Old Testament field, was applied with a new thoroughness by Gunkel and others to the New Testament. A host of willing workers took up the slogan: the origin of Christianity was not to be found in Judaism alone or in the teaching and personality of Jesus, but in the surrounding pagan world; religious ideas and practices are transmitted not merely through the medium of books, but in a mysterious sub-literary realm where diverse peoples and nations become one. Thus primitive Christianity, it was supposed, was truly a syncretistic religion; it showed its true worth not by an aloofness from the surrounding world, but by the assimilation and remodeling of what it received.

The "history-of-religion method", so hostile to the supernaturalistic view of Christianity, was scientific in aim; but underlying it there was perhaps something profounder than a purely scientific impulse. Men sought to understand the human phenomenon of religion in order that from their new vantage ground of scientific detachment they might make that phenomenon a help rather than a hindrance to that self-development of humanity which is the goal of modern effort. If such was the purpose, it seems not to have been attained. The substitution of an abstraction called "religion" for the exclusive devotion to one particular religion called Christianity has brought but cold comfort to the human heart.

Into that cold world of scientific detachment there has come in recent years in Germany the imperious tones of a new message—a new message that addresses itself to the soul of every

man. It is the message of Karl Barth and Thurneysen and Gogarten and Brunner and other exponents of the so-called "theology of crisis". Barth's famous commentary on Romans is a commentary of a kind strange to the modern world. Not the message of Romans to men of long ago, but its message to men of today, is the subject of this strange exposition of the Apostle's words. Many readers hold up their hands in horror. The long battle for grammatico-historical exegesis, they say, seems to have been fought in vain; we are sinking back into the "pneumatic exegesis" dear to allegorizers of ages long gone by. For such criticism we are not without sympathy. The "Epistle to the Romans" of Karl Barth is certainly a very strange book, and the Apostle Paul would probably be amazed if he could know that it purports to be an exposition of what he wrote regarding the way of salvation to the Roman Church. But as over against his critics Barth has undoubtedly a certain measure of right on his side. A grammatico-historical exegesis so perverted as to involve aloofness of the exegete from his subject-matter has given us at the most but an external and mechanical comprehension of what the Bible says. Only the man who comes to the Bible with the despairing question of his own soul, with the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" can really understand the Word of God. That much insight at least is conveyed by the strange commentaary of Karl Barth.

It would indeed be a great mistake to regard the Barthian teaching as a real return to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are, indeed, in it profoundly evangelical elements. The awful transcendence of God, as over against the pantheizing teaching of Schleiermacher and of great sections of the modern Church, the stupendous gulf between the world and God that is found in sin, the necessity and the all-sufficiency of divine grace, the rejection, as profoundly un-Christian, of the boundless modern "tolerance" and indifference in the religious sphere, the necessity above all of hearkening not to human experience, but to God's Word—these are truly Christian convictions in the teaching of Brunner and Barth. But on the other side is to be put the strange epistemology of the

Barthian school, which makes us wonder whether these men are not in danger of falling into a skepticism even more complete than that against which they are protesting in the modern world, and the strange indifference to questions of literary and historical criticism with regard to Jesus Christ, an indifference so great that even Bultmann, with his extreme skepticism in the historical sphere, can apparently be regarded as a real member of the Barthian school.

What can be said at any rate is that the Barthian movement, with the remarkable influence that it is attaining among the youth of Germany, has at least thrown the religious world into a state of flux. That fact is only one indication more of what we have already observed—that after the rejection of the New Testament account of the origin of Christianity modern naturalistic historians have not yet been able to put anything in its place. The most imposing effort in this direction, perhaps, was the “Liberal Jesus” of twenty-five or so years ago. But confidence in that reconstruction has today been undermined. It looks, therefore, as though modern naturalistic criticism of the New Testament were on the verge of bankruptcy. The Christian religion is certainly an important historical phenomenon. How did it come into being? The New Testament has a definite answer to that question. Christianity, according to the New Testament, is based upon the supernatural person of Jesus Christ. But if that answer is to be rejected, what is to be substituted for it? Modern naturalistic criticism has not been able to agree upon any answer.

Upon that fact some hope for the future may reasonably be based. It is unsatisfactory from the scientific point of view to leave the mighty edifice of the Christian religion hanging in the air, and it is unsatisfactory also to the human heart. It may be that in the scientific impasse to which modern naturalistic criticism has come there may be those who will call in question the naturalistic presuppositions which have led us into such a state; it may be that the naturalistic historians, despite all their brilliancy, may prove to be on the wrong track and that Theodor Zahn, with the other “conservative” scholars of our time, may prove to be on the right track after

all; it may be that even in the face of modern skepticism there may be those who will say, not to the reduced Jesus of naturalistic reconstruction and not to the vague figure of a Christ whom every race and every generation is free to interpret for itself, but to the mighty Saviour presented in the whole Word of God: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

THE PRESENT STATE OF OLD TESTAMENT CRITICISM.

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The Editor's request for an article on this subject meets, it must be confessed, with a hesitant and diffident response, not because of any lack of importance or timeliness in such a discussion, but only because of the difficulties necessarily involved. So wide a field of Biblical literature and controversy cannot be presented in a cursory magazine article with more than remote approach to adequacy. Such a discussion also requires so much of technical statement and so much of assumed familiarity with fairly useless hypotheses and speculations, any writer must shrink from so harassing a kindly disposed reader. And then, too, it is no longer possible to speak of Old Testament "Criticism" as of one, but in reality of "Criticisms", as of very many. In the countless shifts of the group of varied gentlemen somewhat underservedly known as Old Testament "critics" (*i. e.*, judges) there is found a mental agility comparable to the muscular alertness of a certain parasitic and aphanipterous insect. When overtaken in one theory they readily escape to another. The unity of the critics is still a dream. A criticism without prospect of a new theory is not better than potato without salt, or lips without ruby or pearl. It hath then no longer enchantment, no charms to soothe the