

The Princeton Seminary Bulletin

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No. 1

The One Hundred and Twenty-second Commencement

Baccalaureate Sunday was observed on May the 13th by a special service in Miller Chapel conducted by President Stevenson. Special music was furnished by a male chorus from the Westminster Choir School. The subject of the sermon was "The Sovereignty of Truth", the text being John 18:37. Following the sermon the Lord's Supper was observed by the graduating class and by the large number of friends who were present to take part in the service.

The Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on Monday at two o'clock. A memorial minute regarding the long service to the Seminary of Edward P. Holden, Esq., was presented by Mr. Spencer S. Marsh and was adopted, the Board standing and being led in prayer by the Rev. W. Beatty Jennings, D.D.

On this same afternoon, at five o'clock, a reception was given at "Springdale" by Dr. and Mrs. Stevenson to the graduating class, and the Alumni and their friends.

As neither the Seminary Chapel nor the First Presbyterian Church is large enough to accommodate those who desire to attend the Commencement exercises, the use of Alexander Hall was granted by Princeton University for the use of the Seminary on this occasion. The exercises were held on Tuesday morning at half past ten o'clock. Impressive music was rendered by the Westminster Choir. The main feature of the occasion was the inauguration of the Rev. Donald Mackenzie, D.D., as the Charles T. Haley Professor of Biblical Theology. The Rev. William L. McEwan, D.D., LL.D., President of the Board, conducted the service of inauguration. The charge to the Professor was delivered by the Rev. Stuart Nye Hutchison, D.D., after which the inaugural address was delivered by Dr. Mackenzie. This address is printed in the present issue of the Bulletin. After the address certificates were granted, degrees were conferred and the message to the graduating class was delivered by the President of the Seminary.

The Annual Alumni Luncheon was held in the Princeton University Gymnasium.

The Fellowship in Church History to Lynn Boyd Rankin.

The First Scribner Prize in New Testament Literature to William Sanford LaSor.

The Second Scribner Prize to Ralph Kline Wheeler.

The Hugh Davies Prize in Homiletics to Everett Blanchard Cowan.

The Benjamin Stanton Prize in Old Testament Literature to Charles Theodore Fritsch.

The First Robert L. Maitland Prize in New Testament Exegesis to Lockhart Amerman.

The Second Robert L. Maitland Prize to Richard Moulton Hadden.

The John Finley McLaren Prize in Biblical Theology to Kaichi Takeda.

Inaugural Address

Inaugural Address delivered by

DONALD MACKENZIE, D.D.,

Charles T. Haley Professor of Biblical Theology, May 15, 1934.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. President and friends, I am deeply moved by the exercises of this hour.

By the secret providence of God, I find myself enrolled today among the teachers of this Seminary—a Seminary which is the oldest and which, without any reflection on our honored sister institutions, is, in some respects the most representative in the Presbyterian Church in this nation.

Your deliberate choice has placed me in this Apostolic company of teachers—surely a great honor, not sought by me, and not accepted without searching of heart.

In the consciousness of my weakness, which made me hesitate to assume this grave responsibility, I fall back on God who has promised to qualify those whom He calls, and I rely greatly on your continued prayers, sympathy and goodwill.

May I here in your name and in my own, pay my dutiful respects to my predecessor—Dr. Geerhardus Vos—whom it is not my privilege to know save through his writings, but whom you know, and who is regarded as a master in his subject by

those competent to judge. We hope that God may long spare him to enjoy his well-earned retirement.

Be assured that the vows I have now taken upon myself, and the charge delivered to me in your name, are not regarded by me as in any sense a formality. I view them as a solemn dedication to the work to which you have called me. And above and behind and through your actions, I seem to be keenly conscious of a more august Presence—to whom one day I must render an account, and whose verdict on mine and everyman's work will be final.

I would like to take as my motto what an old Greek commentator (Euthymius Zigabenus, Circa 1100 A.D.), said of our Lord's presence as a lad among the doctors in the temple,

"Let us then who are teachers fear, knowing that in our midst is the Christ, paying attention to how we teach."

In truth, I value more than I can say, your confidence in me, but I covet earnestly the approbation of that Unseen Presence. May He never be absent from my desires, either in the privacy of my studies, or in the publicity of my class-room deliverances.

The subject on which I am about to address you is "The Importance of Biblical Theology".

On an occasion such as this, it is very natural for a newly installed professor to extol one's own subject, so that other subjects are made to do obeisance to it, as his brethren's sheaves did to Joseph's. He is tempted to regard these other subjects as Gibeonites—mere hewers of wood and drawers of water. But this tendency to extol our own subject unduly is, I am sure, what Francis Bacon would call an idol, i.e., an insidious and often an unconscious tendency to error of which, as you know, Bacon mentioned four kinds*, which he called idols. Now this temptation to extol your own subject unduly—however venerated by precedent—this Baconian idol of the den*—I propose within limits to resist

*Bacon *Novum Organum*, Bk. I. 1. *Idola Tribus*. 2. *Idola Specus*. 3. *Idola Fori*. 4. *Idola Theatri*.

**Idola Specus*: professional zeal, narrow devotion of men to certain studies. Aristotle turned the world into a Syllogism, Gilbert into a magnet, etc.

in what I have to say concerning the importance of Biblical Theology.

I dare not say, in the face of my colleagues, each of them quite convinced—as he should be—that his own subject is of paramount value, I dare not say, being a man of peace, that Biblical Theology is the crown and cream of all our theological studies, whatever I may be tempted to think in the inviolable sanctuary of my own soul.

But it can be said, in truth and soberness, that Biblical Theology is a very important branch of theological discipline. At least I approach the work of this chair in that spirit of faith in the dignity and value of the subject, and I urge myself on in moments of depression by saying, as Paul says in Rom. 11:13, "Magnify thine office."

Let me put before you some considerations to substantiate, or at any rate to illustrate, this importance; and even if my reasons are doubtful, and my illustrations indifferent, I will still contend that the proposition itself is sound. Consider, for instance,

1. *What the Aim of Biblical Theology Is.*

Leaving out for the moment that differentiating designation "Biblical," the aim of all theology is—using language familiar to us from our childhood—to find out and to teach "what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man." Now if it can do that in any measure, obviously its importance must be great.

For the soul of man *in its deepest needs* cries out for knowledge of God as his body when hungry cries out for food. What is Thy name? Oh that I knew where I might find Him! Lord, show us the Father. Who art Thou, Lord? Whether at Jabbok, or in Uz, in the upper room, or at the gate of Damascus, this is the question of questions wherever the crust of superficiality is broken and the soul is seeking for reality in deep waters.

Theology is the fruit of "existential" thinking on ultimate reality when men are at the "crises of their fate and affairs are balanced on a razor's edge" (Herodotus). Obviously then it is important if it can in

any satisfactory measure answer the deepest questions of the human soul.

The most thoughtful men of all ages—not only among the prophets and the saints, but among the sages—seem to agree that this knowledge of God, if it can be found, is of primary value. Thus the philosopher Hegel, in a day of stress and strain, when Germany was seeking to renew her strength after the Napoleonic debacle, said: "A nation which has a false or bad conception of God has also a bad state, bad government and bad laws." He went on to say that a true view of God is more important for a nation than is the state of its exchequer or of its military resources. I venture to subscribe to that statement of the great idealistic philosopher.

And William James who, metaphysically, disagreed so violently with Hegel, agrees with him at least here, only, as a good American, he applied the matter to the individual citizen rather than to the nation as a whole. He assures us—borrowing his illustration from Mr. Chesterton—that it is more important for a landlady to be sure that her lodger's religion is right than that his bank-book is right. Whatever the state of his bank account may be, yet if his religion is wrong, he may leave her in the lurch. One day, or probably one night, he "may fold his tents like the Arabs, and silently steal away"—without paying his bill, and if you want an explanation of his defalcation, it is just the explanation of all defalcations, viz., bad theology.

And a more modern thinker, Dr. Whitehead, seems to agree both with the great idealist and the gusty pragmatist. "Today," he says, "there is but one religious dogma in debate. What do you mean by God? And in this respect today is like all its yesterdays. This is the fundamental religious dogma, and all other dogmas are subsidiary." One of the paradoxes of our own time is that while many preachers are getting less theological, many scientists are becoming more so.

There seems then to be something like a *consensus sapientium*—a consent of the wise—as well as a *consensus sanctorum*—from Plato downwards, yes, and from

earlier than Plato, as to the supreme importance for men and nations of a right theology. Students will recall how the great Greek thinker—the most Christian of all thinkers outside Christianity—makes a right theology constructive of any ideal state and a false theology destructive of the same, and with what zeal he argues the point! Theologically Plato was undoubtedly a Puritan in his attitude. True education, according to him, must begin with religion and religious teaching must have a true idea of God, (—Republic Bk. II.)—a germinal idea which came to its full consciousness, not in Greek philosophy, but in Christianity, so that the Second Book of the Republic is not a bad introduction to the study of theology even now. We can insist, then, on the importance of theology with a good historical conscience, though we are well aware that there has always been a minority who maintained that religion is either an infantile illusion bred by fear and ignorance, or a cerebral senility* produced by the approach of death, as men draw nigh to that unknown bourne whence no traveller returns.

We are also aware that there have been always a wistful few who hesitated to say that we could know anything with certainty about the Eternal, and considered therefore that we had better cultivate the immediate present in Stoical acquiescence or unyielding despair, or in wistful, tremulous hope.

Whether these minorities are growing or not it is difficult to say. My own impression is that they are diminishing—although I confess that here the wish for me may be father to the thought—and that today even a hardened American anti-theistic humanist would hesitate to say with Auguste Comte: "Science will finally conduct God to the frontier and bow Him out for His provisional services." And just as little would they agree with another writer still living—Julian Huxley—that "God is but the personalised residuum of our ignorance."

In spite, then, of these minorities, which often are so clamorous that they give themselves and others the impression that they are the majority, I think we may safely say that man is essentially and not accidentally religious. Our trouble does not appear to me to be that our race is in danger of becoming irreligious but that it is in grave danger, as it has always been, of fabricating and of following false religions, and wherever there is religion there must be theology unless we exclude religion altogether from the realm of the intelligence.

Now the object of true theology is to banish false conceptions of God and false attitudes towards Him, not in the Lucretian way of eradicating the religious instinct but by supplying a true conception and a worthy attitude, so as to make God the object of our worship and adoration, the ideal of our intelligence, the motive for our conduct and our hope for immortality.

Our problem is to banish false theologies—and no theology is a false theology—from their unhallowed lordship over men's souls. We must, in my judgment, regard a false religion not as a matter of indifference but as a dishonor to Deity and a danger to men. "It were better," says Francis Bacon, "to have no opinion of God at all than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him. For the one is unbelief, the other is contumely, and certainly superstition is a reproach to the Deity. Plutarch sayeth well to that purpose. 'Surely,' sayeth he, 'I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such a man at all as Plutarch than that they should say there was one Plutarch that would eat his own children as soon as they were born, as the poet speaks of Saturn.'" As I agree with Hegel as to the value of theology, so do I agree with Bacon as to the danger and the degradation of a bad theology.

Every missionary in vital grips with heathen religions, every evangelist dealing with the secularised temper of our time, will agree with Francis Bacon in regarding false religion as an affront to God. So at any rate did the prophets and apostles; and it is not easy to prove that their attitude was wrong. Even when we can trace

*Read Comte's famous *Law of the Three Stages* and Lange's *History of Materialism* which makes religion a beautiful illusion to which there is no corresponding Reality.

deeper and truer elements in false religions—and we cannot go further in this respect than Malachi seems to do, who, sick at heart with the hypocrisy of his own age and people, says: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name is great among the Gentiles and in every place incense is offered unto my name and a pure offering; for my name is great among the Gentiles. But ye profane it."—(Mal. I: 11)—even when, horrified by profanity in our homeland, we go as far as Malachi did in his own day, yet I venture to think that, either at home or abroad, false accretions of error, perversions of truth regarding God, are objects that ought to move us with holy zeal, as it did Paul in Athens long ago. For bad views of God, according to Paul, darken the intelligence and corrupt the heart (Romans I). It was not lack of religion that was wrong with Athens in Paul's time—for there were as many gods as there were men—but the multiplicity of false religions. It is not lack of religion, when you take a wide historical view of the case, that is wrong with men, but a superfluity of perverted thoughts and degrading superstitions, with their inevitable evil consequences. Now it is in view of this worldwide situation that true theology is so important. It really concerns every man's business and bosom. It is of primary importance for every state, it is the crying need of the world. If the world is to be unified it must be in the truth. Falsehood disintegrates, truth unites. And this leads me to meet an objection often raised against what I am advocating.

It is sometimes said that "we can never expect all men to have the same religion," and that the best we can hope for is a delicate remodelling and repainting of all superstitions without materially disturbing their essence. The idea expressed in that saying is not modern, however prevalent it may be at the present time. It was the great Eclectic argument of the best heathen—not the worst heathen but the best—in early Christian centuries, as readers of Plutarch and Plotinus know, and it was used from the very start to throw cold

water on Christian missionary effort, but we are glad it did not succeed; nor can it ever succeed when God is taken seriously, for, as Pascal pointed out, eclecticism of this sort is really based on scepticism as to truth and indifferentism as to religion itself.

If the phrase means that there are indifferent matters of outward forms and ceremonies—adiaphora—and that these are likely to continue, we agree. There are indifferent things in Christianity. You remember how Calvin, in a forceful, famous and felicitous phrase, spoke of certain rites carried over by some Protestant communions from the corruptions of mediaevalism, as "tolerabiles nugae" or "ineptiae"—allowable trifles. If that is all that is meant, we make no great fuss about it. It has never been our way to quarrel over trifles. We distinguish things that differ just because we approve things that are excellent.

But that is not all that is meant by those who use this saying (that we can never expect all men to have the same religion). They mean something very different, and in order to meet their case we shall take an argument from science. How would it sound for a scientist to say: "You can never expect all men to have the same science"? If he did say so, it would just mean that he did not understand what science meant. Much more so in regard to the truth concerning God. There is only one true view of God whether men hold it or not. Truth is not determined by a majority vote but by reality. That really is why the early church laid such stress on essential doctrine, not through pedantry, as some think, and not through love of disputation, as others think, but by a healthy heaven-implanted instinct. We must believe in the consistency and universality of truth, in its value, in its suitability and in its adaptability to the common mind and heart of men everywhere, of whom it has been said, "God fashioneth all their hearts alike." Ps. 33:15). Truth is catholic and nature one, and it is great and must prevail.

Therefore Christianity, or truth as it is

in Jesus Christ, can never give up its claim to universality and its fitness for all men. That would just mean that it had given up its faith in its own divine origin and that it had become a culture or a philosophy. Now cultures and philosophies pass away. Culture, ancient or modern, is quite willing to recognize many partial saviours, but no Absolute One.

"One in a Judean manger and one by Avon stream,

One over against the mouth of the Nile and one in the Academe."

But Christianity knows only one God—the Father—from whom are all things and we for Him, and One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things*, and we by Him, and One Holy Spirit—the Life-giver and Sanctifier (I Cor. 8:6). On this is based its firm assurance of final victory, and it can sing in anticipation, while it works for the coming of that day when

"O'er our ransomed nature
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign."

Therefore true theology is important because it is demanded by the nature of God and by the need of men. It alone gives meaning to human life and a purpose and a goal to history. There is no substitute for it; and to deny it or to refuse it to men is not impartiality but impiety and inhumanity. "We are," saith Paul (Romans 1:14) "debtors to all men," not for what they give us but for what God has given us for them, viz., the gospel. "Can we whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high, Can we to men benighted the lamp of life deny?" It matters greatly to men and nations what they think of God and how they think of Him. God is not a matter of indifference to us, and therefore true religion must be every man's chief concern; and we are not a matter of indifference to Him, for He is vitally interested in our thoughts of Him. A Laodicean God is, for any serious theologian, a horror, and therefore a Laodicean believer is a

deformity. True theology is important because it is the enemy of the torpor of a foul tranquillity in regard to the highest interests of the soul—its relation to its Maker. True theology from the very nature of the case must be a missionary theology. A bad theology kills evangelisation.

But now consider for a moment

2. *The Force of the Descriptive Adjective "Biblical,"*

which differentiates this subject from theology in general and from other branches of theology in particular. What does this adjective "Biblical" imply?

It indicates the source and the standard of our knowledge of God—the source whence we are to derive our knowledge and the standard or norm which must ever test the truth and relevancy of our grasp and exposition of that knowledge. And in the light of that, I venture to maintain not only the importance of theology in general but specifically of Biblical Theology in particular, and I do so here briefly by way of contrast, avoiding, as unsuitable for such a public occasion as this, an academic discussion such as is demanded in the classroom. Let us think of this matter by way of contrast.

In contrast with the procedure of going to Scripture for our theology, man may seek for knowledge of God from many other sources—from the phenomena of nature and what is behind, in, and above them. He may seek this knowledge from the absorbing pageant of history, from the varied emotions, passions, thoughts and desires—*quidquid agunt homines*—that give content and color to his own inner life, from those instincts and intuitions also which issue in obstinate questionings as man reacts to his own experiences, ordinary and extraordinary, as he goes through life—a pilgrim as he thinks of eternity.

Now according to the source from which you seek your knowledge of God, so is the knowledge itself, in quantity, quality and clarity. In this way those contrasts arise with some of which I hurriedly deal to throw light on the force of the adjective "Biblical."

(1) Thus you may have a "Natural

*Christianity does expect the day to come when all nations and all men shall have the same religion. It would not be Christianity if it did not.

Theology." And at some epochs in Christian history this has been heralded as the most sure, satisfactory and sufficient source. "Although," says Francis Hutcheson, "all philosophy is pleasant and profitable, there is nevertheless no part of it more productive and rich than that which contains the knowledge of God *quaeque theologia naturalis.*"

What has Biblical Theology to say to that attitude and to that claim—an attitude and a claim still taken and made by many earnest men whose study is but little in the Bible, as Chaucer would say?

Now there is a natural theology. Nature displays God's glory, power and Godhead—and we must insist on a theistic philosophy as against all forms of anti-theism. Biblical Theology does not deny or minimise this natural foundation, but asserts it. It says through psalmists and prophets what Ptolemy said as he looked at God's heavens:

"I know I am a mortal born, a creature of a day,

But when I view the wheeling stars,
each on its cyclic way,

No more I trudge the earth afoot, but
swept above the sky

I taste the god's immortal fare with
Zeus himself on high."

(Anth. Palat. 9.577)

The Biblical Theologian is willing to subscribe in substance on this matter, but with two important reservations to the deliverance of the Vatican Council of 1870, which said: "If anyone says that the one and true God, our Creator and Lord, cannot be known with certainty by the natural light of human reason, through the things that are made, let him be anathema." Leaving out the "anathema sit" and putting a large mark of interrogation at "with certainty" (cum certitudine), we may agree, but only with this double caveat. For experience long continued through the ages is a sufficient practical proof that this original and continued source of knowledge of God, derived by reasoning from nature, is partial and precarious—nay more, men have confused even its partial message and perverted its uncertain meaning, so that in all ages and climes, even those ages charac-

terised by keenness of speculation and by advances in culture, men in general have driven into idolatry and superstition, and as a matter of fact still do when trusting solely to the light of reason. "The world by wisdom knew not God" is a truth corroborated by past and present experience alike. Nature alone won't do. Thank God, He has given us His written Word, His Incarnate Word as well as His natural Word. Do not undervalue nature. God speaks to us and all men through it. It is a divine visual Word. Our objection is to those who make it all-sufficient and despise God's personal Word in His Word of Grace.

There is no reason to expect that even with the great advances in our time in our knowledge of nature any different result will ensue without the aid of Holy Scripture and the divinely given message enshrined therein. It is really absurd to imagine that physical or psychological science can ever displace Scripture as sources of divine knowledge. That is not their office. The faith once for all delivered to the saints transcends any natural theology of the past, the present or the future. Neither Deism nor Theism is sufficient alone. They both reel on their uncertain foundations until supported from on high by God's own Word, and they lack completeness and certainty until we can say "The Word became flesh," or "The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." They may and ought to dispose the mind to accept revelation, but they themselves are not source or substance of that revelation; and were never meant to be. Take all God's revelation and rejoice that His revelation of grace and of redemption is complete in His Word as His revelation of power is in nature. Take both. Take all.

So much for rational or philosophical theology; and now for (2) *Mystical Theology* of which we hear so much in our own day. Here again it is not to be expected that any mystical achievements of those more emotional activities of man's nature, pursued with or without the rigors of ascetic discipline, can, with any assurance, lead to God without the guidance and correction of Holy Scripture. God does speak

to men's hearts everywhere. We bless His name for it. Every true thought and emotion all over the earth from the beginning are from Him. He speaks now to men who are denied the privileges we have, but oh, they need the message of His love we have in Scripture, and in the Scriptures alone.

Mysticism of all kinds has been tried in past ages even more seriously than now—far more seriously than they are likely to be tried in the future—and we can say of it also what was said by an apostle about human wisdom: "The world by intuition or emotion or a sense of the numinous knew not God," nor is there any reason to imagine that it can do so now or in any future time. If reason without Scripture (where Scripture is available) leads to a dry Sahara, instinct and intuition without Scripture lead to a Serbonian bog where armies whole have sunk. This is not a prejudice of ours to bolster up our contention, but the plain deliverance of history past and present. A historic revelation is neither generated in the logical brain or the heaving bosom of man by a kind of autogenesis. God must speak—and He has spoken in word and deed—and the record of this we have in the Word. That is the contention Biblical Theology takes for granted and which, when denied, it has to prove. It can prove it even by exhibiting the fulness and the blessedness of its contents. Mystical theology is not a substitute for nor an addendum to revelation. It is exactly in the same position, worthy of the same treatment and subject to the same limitations as rational or philosophical theology is—in regard to Biblical Theology. Do not imagine that I for one moment deny that God spoke to good men in all ages and lands and speaks so now; but they like Socrates long for that sure word we have in Scripture and we ought to give it to them. It is not ours alone—it is theirs also.

(3) *Nor again can conscience, the source of moral theology, with its unearthly note of authority, bring us to God, or God to us, independent of Holy Scripture.* We are grateful to Immanuel Kant for his exposition of Conscience. We also believe in it.

But we remember what John Knox on an historic occasion said to Queen Mary. "Madam, Conscience needs knowledge." And as he pointed out—knowledge of divine truth is to be had not from any sect but from God's Word. We really must in our hazy day insist again that Scripture in its main message is clear, that in spite of obscurities it is a sufficient guide for men as to what they are to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of men.

Here again we are compelled to say "Men by conscience knew not God."

Men have never been without all three (reason, emotion, and conscience), but neither one of them, nor all of them combined, have sufficed. To pit them against the Historic and Final Revelation we have in the Word, is like holding our farthing candles to Heaven's Sun. We thank God that every man has a Conscience—a spark of Heaven's light. We thank God for the light it now affords where revelation as we have it in Scripture is denied, but it is not enough, it is not satisfied with itself until it is enlightened by Christ. Reason, Heart and Conscience are inalienable properties of man, nor have we any interest in belittling their function and influence. We regard them, on the contrary, with awe and respect, and, I trust, can use them as other men do. Biblical Theology gives them their place as the natural bases and grounds to which the revealing and redeeming God can and does address the purposes of His will and the passions of His heart, now as He has ever done. They, however, neither originate nor safeguard the Word of God with which Biblical Theology is supremely concerned. The Word rather delivers them from their own impotency, despair and uncertainty. They find their true reasons, their satisfying emotions and their moral light and leading in the Word of God, and in God the Word. By attending to the voice of God in His Word, they do not lose their values—they gain them.

The importance of Biblical Theology is just that it starts with this Word of God as an historical datum. For this Word has not come to us immediately, as the Koran is said to have come without his-

torical mediation. It did not meteor-like fall down from heaven like the image of Diana of the Ephesians. It came through history—not history in general, but a redemptive History which we have preserved in Sacred Scripture. Scripture therefore carries about it all the marks of history, and for its study the Biblical theologian must use historical aids, recognising God's method of economy and mediation in the revelation of Himself. Therefore for its instruments Biblical Theology demands a knowledge of Biblical times and customs and of those languages in which that Word is once for all enshrined in its most immediate form, as a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel. I therefore hope that the day will never come when an impatient church will lay itself open to Tennyson's indignant reproach: "Priests who know not how to read their own sacred books." While we have excellent versions of Holy Scripture in our own tongue and increasingly in all the languages and dialects of earth, yet the importance of a direct knowledge of the sacred tongues cannot be overestimated. For the church to lose altogether this knowledge is not only loss of prestige but of power. While Holy Scripture is capable of expression in any language, those languages in which it was first expressed have a position of dignity and of determining value for the Biblical theologian and through him for the church at large. While I am aware that some may disagree with me here, yet you will allow me to express today at least what is a deep conviction of my head and of my heart.

We are sometimes accused of what is called undue Biblicism—a worship of the letter—a treating of Scripture as if you resorted to every isolated sentence of it as an oracle. It is not necessary here to refute that. We treat Scripture not in isolation but historically. We recognise the growth in revelation. We do not as some think imagine that our first parents knew as much as we now know to whom God speaks in Christ. In Biblical Theology we should be taught how to regard Holy Scripture in its development and in its totality—and to interpret it all in the light

of Christ. We do not worship Scripture, but the God who has therein recorded His Mind and who now speaks to us through it by His Holy Spirit. We value Scripture because we find in it the record of Christ's redeeming love and grace. Men tell us we ought to look for larger revelations—and we are glad to get such, but we know that no greater revelation of God's love can ever be given than He has given to us and to all on Calvary. We know that the Spirit of God now leads us into all truth, but He never leads us away from Christ but closer to Him. The Bible as it is now is invaluable, indispensable. "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!"

I have up till now expressed my judgment, for what it is worth, on the relation between Biblical Theology and rational, mystical and moral theologies. But that is not enough. (4) *Traditional and comparative religion*. It is obvious that most men do not get their theology from these sources by personal discovery, but that they get it from *tradition*. Thus one born among Buddhists is likely to be a Buddhist, as one born among Catholics or Protestants is likely to adopt or rather to imbibe the religion of his birth. From that natural fact some argue that the proper thing is to leave matters at that and to attempt no change. There is not a little of that temper at present in America. Let the Jew be a good Jew. Let the Catholic be a good Catholic. Let the Protestant be a good Protestant. Let all the good fancy religionists and non-religionists be good, etc. But obviously this is a temper born of exhaustion and of the despair of truth or of indifference to truth.

Now there is a tact and delicacy at the heart of Christian truth which will not needlessly offend any worshipper who sincerely believes in his inherited faith. It may even come to pass that in the interests of social order and for political ends a compromise may for a season appear best—as it did in Germany after the Reformation when each region had its religion, Catholic here, Protestant there. But you cannot in the long run equate *regio* with *religio*.

Truth is more than geography or tradition. That a man is born a Buddhist, Confucianist or Jew is not a sufficient reason why he should ever remain so. If the apostles had acted on that principle of "truth equals tradition," or "truth is a matter of geography," we would at this day, like our far-back ancestors, be worshipping stocks and stones. Some imagine that the best religion is what is common to all religions and that we get at it as we get at the highest common factor in algebra. But that is as egregious a fallacy as if you maintained that the best music is what is common to all sounds. The Biblical theologian, convinced of the unique truth of Holy Scripture and of its worth for all men, cannot be satisfied without offering this truth and bringing the claims of this truth to all—not to disturb them, but because he knows it is their heritage. The Bible is not sectarian, but as universal as the God who gave it. It is a divine heritage which in God's purpose is for all men, Heaven's *testamentum* or "will" conveying by the very signature of redeeming love God's gift to the race and not to a section but to the whole. The contrast between Biblical theology and other theologies is that between the perfect and the partial.

(5) *One other contrast* may suffice for my present purpose. It is well known that the modern separation of Biblical Theology as a distinct branch of theological study was due to a certain dissatisfaction with what, rightly or wrongly, was regarded as the unwarrantable extensions and elaborations of certain dogmatic theologians, either in the form of Roman Catholic or Protestant Scholasticism, or of theologies which, while Biblical in dress, borrowed more from philosophical systems than from Scripture. For this reason Biblical Theology claimed a right to special treatment. It owed its origin not simply or mainly to the aberrations of heretics, or to the unwarrantable pretensions of natural religion, or of mystical piety, but rather to a desire to test, and so to attest and approve, or otherwise, the expansions and inferences of dogmatic statements. This was what happened at the Reformation when Scholasticism de-

parted by subtlety from the simplicity of Scripture—and it has happened since. The Bible always calls us back to Reality and so Biblical Theology is ever necessary.

In this respect, all I need say here and now is that every system of dogma, and every confessional and credal statement, however venerable, must ever go back to Scripture for correction and verification. What nature is to science, so is the Holy Scripture to dogma or creed. It is not the immediate duty of the Biblical theologian to start with credal statements and find their verification in Scripture; but to start with Scripture and verify, if possible, credal statements; and in his inferences he must not go beyond Scripture itself. Where Scripture is silent, he must be silent; and where it speaks, he must speak.

Now Scripture is not expressed dogmatically, nor does it attempt to exhaust God ontologically, so as to satisfy all possible and impossible speculations concerning the Divine nature. This is not its defect, but its glory and its power. It exhibits God redemptively, and it does so sufficiently for man's supreme need—his need of salvation from sin and his need of sanctification by the Spirit. It unfolds to us the redeeming work of God, and reveals His purpose for the individual and the race. Biblical Theology must respect this characteristic of Scripture and refuse to be more systematic than Holy Writ; above all, it must keep aloft the redemptive purpose for which Scripture is given us.

Let a man take his sin in earnest, and his need of deliverance seriously, and we can with unfaltering assurance point such an one to this Book and the God therein revealed as the Creator, Redeemer, Saviour, Sanctifier and Hope of men. Biblical Theology, however, must not be satisfied with pious reflections on single texts, however necessary and edifying that may be. It ought to aim at a faithful exhibition of a continuous and completed revelation such as we have in the manifoldness of Scripture, and take a conjunct view in which Christianity is not lost in the differences—nor the differences swallowed up in an abstract unity. The earlier phases of

revelation must be read in the light of the final revelation, but with a due historic sense of their incompleteness and partialness. While the gospel is here in germ from the beginning, it is not perfected until the fulness of the times. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." (Heb. I:1-2).

I will not trespass on your patience further, nor is it necessary, but I may say again that, in my judgment, there ought not to be any dubiety in this, or in any Christian church, as to the importance and the imperativeness of this study of Biblical Theology.

It shall be my earnest effort so to study as to further equip myself for this great task and this high office to which you have appointed me this day. Only that Spirit who inspired the Word from the beginning can enable us—however well equipped otherwise—to penetrate to its hidden life and hear its divine voice. That He will not deny His illumination to studious toil and to the dedicated heart is my hope and my stay, as I, in fear and trembling, accept the trust at your hands that has this day been committed to my charge.

**Professor Henry S. Gehman,
Ph.D., S.T.D.**

At the meeting of the Board of Trustees held on May 14th, 1934, on the unanimous recommendation of the Curriculum Committee, the Rev. Henry Snyder Gehman, Ph.D., S.T.D., was elected to the Chair of Old Testament. Dr. Gehman is well known to a number of the Alumni as he has been serving as Visiting Professor in the Seminary since 1930.

The Alumni Association

The annual meeting of the Alumni Association was held at Commencement time in connection with the Alumni

Luncheon in the University Gymnasium which the University had kindly put at the disposal of the Seminary for the occasion. The Rev. Ebenezer Flack, D.D., '93, President of the Association, presided. The blessing was asked by the Rev. Herbert Booth Smith, D.D., '09, after which Dr. Flack gave a word of greeting to the Alumni. The address was delivered by President Harold Willis Dodds, Ph.D., LL.D., of Princeton University.

Adding greatly to the occasion was the presence of the Westminster Choir. Under the direction of Dr. John Finley Williamson several beautiful selections were rendered.

The Rev. Charles R. Erdman, D.D., '91, made his annual report as Treasurer. On nomination of the Executive Committee the following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, Mr. Delavan L. Pierson, '94, of Upper Montclair, N. J.; Vice-President, the Rev. John Van Ness, D.D., '02, of Arabia; Treasurer, the Rev. Charles R. Erdman, D.D., '91; Secretary, the Rev. George H. Talbot, D.D., '23, of Passaic, N. J. Dr. Talbot was nominated for the office of Secretary of the Association in place of the Rev. Robert M. Russell, Jr., D.D., '15, of Larchmont, N. Y., whose resignation, at his own request, was reluctantly accepted. A motion of appreciation of Dr. Russell's services in this capacity was unanimously carried.

On motion of the Executive Committee the following were elected as members of the Alumni Council. The Rev. Frank Niles, '13, of Princeton, N. J., and the Rev. Joseph B. C. Mackie, D.D., '07, for membership on the Council as of the class of 1937, and