

hundred years ago, I should answer, In the *thoroughness and the intelligence with which the Bible is being studied*. Never before was there so fixed and wide-spread a determination to know everything that can be known about the sacred books. Never before were the Biblical languages and all other languages, whose philology or literature can be expected to throw the least ray of additional light on the sacred page, studied so diligently, so scientifically, so minutely, or by so vast a number of scholars. The literatures of ancient Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt have been unearthed and deciphered, and are being studied, largely because of the light they may throw upon Biblical history. The geography and the archæology of the Bible lands are being studied as minutely and enthusiastically as the languages. Learned societies are organized for the promotion of the various departments of Biblical research. Periodicals almost without number are published in this interest. The press sends forth a constant and copious stream of learned and popular works on the Bible, and more copies of the book itself, it is probable, are circulated at present in one year than were circulated during the first sixteen hundred years of Christian history. Then the popular study of the Bible in the Sunday Schools of the world, in connection with the various young people's organizations, in Bible clubs, etc., to say nothing of the multitudes of earnest private students among the learned and the unlearned, is inconceivable in its extent, and its beneficent results are beyond computation. It is true that the critical study of the Bible has not always been conducted with the reverence that is meet, and that conjectural criticism has often gone far beyond the limits that sound science would prescribe; but this is a mere incident in the world-wide and enthusiastic study of the Bible, and irreverent and unsound criticism is sure to be corrected by criticism that is reverent and sound. I think we may rest in the firm assurance that the word of God can endure all the criticism to which it may be subjected, however unreasonable and even hostile it may be, and that it will come forth from the testing process better understood and more highly appreciated than ever. Baptists and their medieval and sixteenth century ancestors have always magnified Bible study, and insisted on getting at the exact meaning of God's word, and making its