

pose a substitute for what has heretofore been known as Sociology, nor does it offer a new sociological method, but it concentrates the attention on a valuable and greatly neglected department of religious inquiry. Christian society is the subject-matter of this department. The exact nature of this society must be determined; its characteristic marks must be given; the principles on which it is founded and by which it is governed must be designated; the genesis of this society must be considered, how it originated and developed; then this society must be correlated to other societies, in order to assign to it the proper place in the great social organism of humanity. This, in broad outlines, gives a clear idea of the general scope of our subject. It aims at the system, the philosophy, the science of Christian society.

Christian Sociology thus evidently becomes one of the constituent factors of the general subject of Sociology. Society in the largest sense must include Christian society, just as it must Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Mohammedan society. Sociology treats religion as one of the most important of the social forces; and it would be strange if it ignored the most exalted of the social forces of religion, which are found in Christianity. If the naturalistic principles which have heretofore been so prevalent in Sociology can not explain Christian society, that is no reason for rejecting the consideration of this society, but a strong reason for revising the current Sociology.

There is nothing peculiar in the construction of Christian Sociology. It deals with facts; these facts are given in history, in experience, and through observation, just as other facts are given. In their discovery and interpretation the severest scientific method is to be applied. If there are limits to the scientific method, so that some facts are beyond its interpretation, then science itself demands the recognition of these limits. The Christian teachings must be put down as facts of

prime significance. With the facts before us, we try to discover their principles and laws, and to construct the Christian social system. We therefore treat the sociological elements of Christianity exactly as we do other human factors. It is self-evident that the investigation is not to be prejudiced from the start by theories and presuppositions which determine the results to be attained before the investigation is begun. The facts must speak for themselves, and the conclusions reached must be the logical results of impartial investigation. How far a science of Christian society is possible will have to be determined by the inquiry itself.

For its materials Christian Sociology goes to the New Testament. This is not so abstracted or isolated as to stand by itself, but is studied in connection with its age and the literature of the times, and in connection with the Old Testament and with the development of Christianity since the foundation of Christian society. Christian Sociology thus involves the discovery and exposition of the sociological factors of Scripture and the interpretation of the historical development of social Christianity.

The method of biblical interpretation may be called critically-constructive; that is, the contents of Scripture must be criticized in order to get the exact facts and the real truth, but the ultimate aim must be the construction of the system of Christian society. The social teachings of Jesus are fundamental. These can be divided into the teachings as contained in the synoptical and Johannine Gospels. After the teachings of Jesus we have those of the apostles, which can be divided into the types represented by James, Peter, Paul, and John.

Even a cursory examination shows that the principles of a distinct kind and form of society are given in the New Testament. These principles are abundant and rich in suggestions. Christianity is misapprehended if viewed as aiming merely at the regeneration and