

ADDRESS

Delivered at the Meeting of the British and Foreign Bible Society, St. John's, Newfoundland, 26th March, 1908, by His Excellency Sir William MacGregor, G.C.M.G., C.B., &c.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is not possible for those of us who have been in the habit of attending these annual meetings of the British and Foreign Bible Society to not feel that there is here to-night a vacant place, the position so long occupied by the late Honourable James Johnson Rogerson.

No person was more earnest, more zealous and sincere, had his heart more truly in this work than our venerable friend who is gone. But though he has left us, his work remains, and we have before us his example, which I trust may long be remembered in the local branch of this Society.

During the last year or two we have read every now and then of what is called the "New Theology." I do not quite know what is meant by the phrase unless it is intended to express the advocacy of a more Christian interpretation by thought and action of the old Bible. If that is what is conveyed by the new theology, then I am humbly, but strongly, in its favour. There is, so far as I know, no place for a new theology that is not based on the old Book. At the same time it is impossible for any fair minded man to read history, especially ecclesiastical history, without seeing that there is still room for immense improvement in the practice of Christianity under an enlightened interpretation of the Scriptures. Great changes

have taken place, and are at this moment more active than at any preceding time, in the interpretation of

Bible, in spirit, and even in the letter. One cannot but see that there is a wide difference between the more severe and imperious spirit of the Old Testament and the brotherly feeling of the New; and that the tendency of the age, and it may be supposed of the "New Theology," is clearly towards the atmosphere and teaching of the New Testament. As this tendency increases mankind will understand the Bible in a more enlightened and less material way than at present, more in a spiritual sense, and less and less in a gross, material, and worldly way. There can be but little doubt that mankind is slowly but perceptibly becoming more developed intellectually. We know sufficient of the earlier races of mankind to feel certain of the progress that man is making in evolution, and we are justified in believing that his developement will be continued. I therefore entertain no doubt that even in a thousand years from now, a great advance will be made in understanding the Scriptures in a more celestial and less in an earthly sense, and in interpreting into action the teaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom that is not of this world. This can be done, I humbly believe will be done, without going to an extreme in Modernism.