

Library of the Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Presented by Prof. B. B. Warfield, D. D.

Division

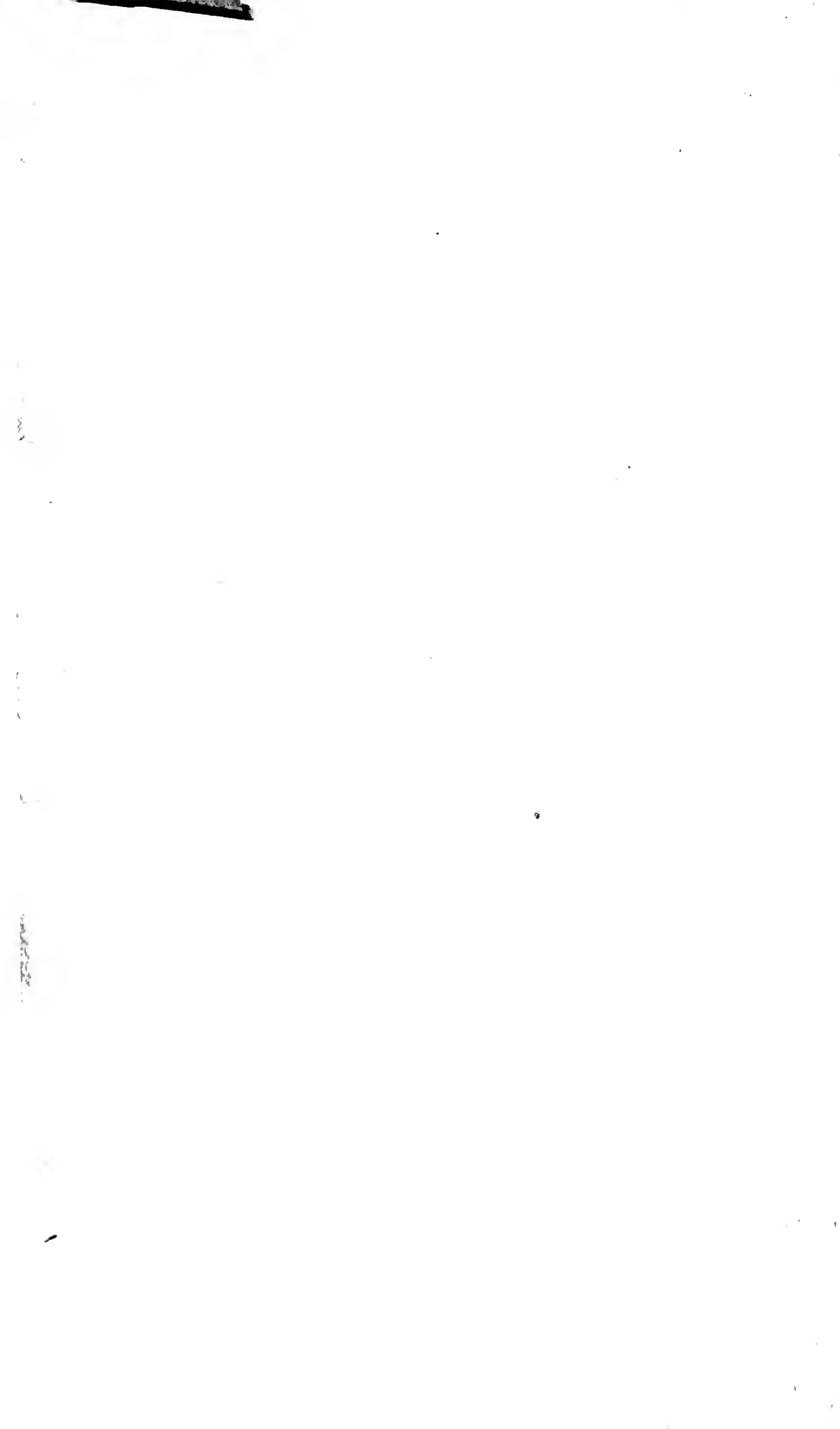
SCC

Section

242.7

v. 1





THE HIGHER CRITICISM

AN ADDRESS

BY

REV. ROBERT F. SAMPLE, D.D.

NEW YORK

THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

THE Higher Criticism is the scientific method of investigation applied to the Bible, dealing with its language and contents. It inquires concerning the authorship of the several books, the age in which they were written, their genuineness and authority. Its conclusions as to authorship and age rest on the general style of the books, and on the use of terms which are supposed to mark the several stages of Biblical literature. This is the question of authenticity.

Then the truthfulness, or its opposite, of the several parts of the Sacred Canon, is determined by their historical accuracy, and this is ascertained by a comparison with cotemporary history, by the reasonableness of the annals, the supposed development of literature and arts and religion, thus determining whether the Bible record is consistent with this intellectual and moral evolution. In other words it is the application of scientific methods to all the questions involved.

Take a rapid survey of the results of the Higher

Criticism as related to the authenticity of the Scriptures. We are informed that the Hexateuch is a composite work, which is referred to many sources. The books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, with their multiplicity of errors, belong to the same category. Ezra and Nehemiah were not written by the men whose names are affixed to them, but by unknown and later authors. Most of the Psalms are post-exilic, but it is not clearly established that David wrote none of them. Solomon did not write the Song of Songs. He is not the author of Ecclesiastes, and wrote only a few of the Proverbs. The prophecy of Isaiah was written by many authors, or it was divided between its reputed author and a Deutero-Isaiah who flourished after the Babylonian captivity. Job, Ruth, Esther, and Daniel are sacred romances, carrying ethical blemishes, for which the only apology is that of historical errancy. The authenticity of Zechariah and Micah is rejected, each of them being referred to a dual authorship. Ezekiel is the author of the prosaic book which bears his name. The authenticity of nine of the so-called minor prophecies is accepted. The same criticism has traversed the New Testament, and has broken down all along the line.

GENESIS OF HIGHER CRITICISM.

The exact genesis of the Higher Criticism is not definitely settled. Some refer it to Dupin, a Professor of the College of France, an expert in Ecclesiasti-

cal history and literature, who has successors on both sides the English Channel. Spinoza of Amsterdam, cotemporary of Du Pin, is claimed by others as its author, although he was by no means a specialist, but swept a wide field of inquiry, and by his destructive system came under the ban of the Church. Berkley, the English Critic, eliminated some of the most objectionable features of Spinoza's system, and as a disciple of Du Pin, falls in the line of orderly succession.

Astruc introduced this criticism in the last century. He dreaded the supernaturalism of the Bible, and endeavored to believe it taught natural religion only. He felt that if the Bible were from God, and therefore true, he could not face death with calmness, nor carry a gleam of hope through it. This man, whose vices outranked his learning, originated the distinction between the Jehovist and the Elohist in the Scripture, and called attention to the supposed anachronisms and interpolations and numerous errors in the Book of Genesis. His name might properly designate that criticism which, with much modification, has continued until the present.

Eichhorn, who died in the early part of this century, was one of the earliest, some speak of him as the father, of the so-called Higher Critics. He demanded for Christianity a historical basis. Like Astruc he rejected supernaturalism, as has been the tendency of most of the later critics, and attempted to explain the miracles of the Bible on the principles of naturalism.

He referred much of the credulity of the sacred writers to superstition, ghostly deceptions, and limited intellectual vision. He regarded some of the epistles of the New Testament as apocryphal, and referred the origin of the Gospels to the first or second century after Christ, so denying their accepted authenticity and weakening their authority.

Nearly half a century later there arose Ferdinand Christian Baur, the originator of the Tübingen School, who caught much of his inspiration as a scholar and critic from Eichhorn, and was accounted by his contemporaries a man of exceptional gifts and attainments. Like Eichhorn he denied miracles. Assuming the impossibility of any departure from natural law, he entered, only to vitiate, the whole field of his research. He created theological distinctions in the Epistles of Paul and of Peter, which were the creation of his own fertile brain, deprecated the supernatural element of both, and pronounced the religious zeal of great leaders of religious thought simply the fervor of speculation and the pride of opinion.

Wellhausen succeeded Baur. He tells us that he voluntarily left the theological faculty of Greifswald because of his lack of sympathy with the belief of the evangelical Church and with Protestantism. He, too, denies miracles. His premise perverted all his reasoning and breaks his conclusions. He cast Genesis into his editorial waste basket, as incredible history, and accepted the rest of the Pentateuch as a compila-

tion from many sources, as varied, but less beautiful, than Joseph's coat of many colors. Having witnessed the defeat of Baur's criticism of the New Testament, he traversed the dimmer fields of the Old, where many of the figures, as he sees them, are ghostly, much of the history untruthful, and the evidences of conflict among religious factions unmistakable. Wellhausen, like Astruc and Eichhorn, will have his day, and his disciples on both sides the water. But like Astruc and Eichhorn, he will carry his theories to the grave. "The grass withereth and the flower of the grass passeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever."

August Von Ewald, a pupil of Eichhorn, a native of Gottingen, and for many years a Professor of Theology in Tübingen, a prolific writer, bold controversialist, and a drastic critic, whose good qualities were as conspicuous as his moral blemishes, wrought with an indomitable energy in the interests of the Higher Criticism, holding the composite character of the Pentateuch, extending its legislation over long periods of time; making the Psaltery the production of many minds, David occupying a minor place; setting aside many traditions concerning the history of Israel, and, in his theological teachings, as destructive as he was extravagant.

It is not necessary to speak at length of later critics. Goethe said, "There are many echoes; few voices." There is nothing new in the criticism of Oxford and

Andover. Their utterances are simply the reflection of the schools of Gottingen, Tübingen and Halle. The echoes may outlive the voices, but like them will eventually die. The Higher Criticism with which we are specially concerned, rejects some of the positions of the earlier critics, but accords with them in many particulars and is notably rationalistic.

Dr. Briggs, of Union Seminary, denies that he accords with extreme rationalistic critics. He has expressed much sympathy with the thoroughness with which Keunen and Wellhausen do their work, but condemns their hostility to a divine element in the Bible. He stands, as he tells us, "With Delitzsch, Driver, Davidson, Cheyne, and many others of that school of critics which recognizes the supernatural element in Holy Scripture," and he endeavors to reconcile the divine authority of the Bible with the results of modern science. Of the latter class of critics Delitzsch was the most evangelical, and in his last years receded from some rationalistic positions which he had tentatively held. Driver may not be styled a rationalist, but his system is rationalistic. His views of authority, and his eschatology are not scriptural, and, therefore, are not safe.

Davidson, following close after DeWette, whose supernaturalism is æstheticism, mutilates the Old Testament, and wholly discards or, at least reduces to a minimum, the doctrines of inspiration and prophetic foresight, in accord with a fundamental prin-

ciple of the Higher Criticism. Canon Cheyne, with whom Professor Briggs sympathizes, admitted to be a vigorous thinker, and as familiar with Ecclesiastical literature as he is courteous in social life, makes wide departures from the long-accepted teaching of the Christian Church, and from the most consistent and obvious interpretation of many portions of the word of God. Dr. E. D. Morris, of Lane Seminary, having reviewed Cheyne's work on the Psalms, concludes that he and his successors have left the old foundations. "Giving up," he says, "inspiration and supernaturalness, they must logically give up other statements and theories also, and the Bible in their hands and under their treatment can become none other than human literature, destitute alike of devotional trustworthiness and spiritual power."

A rationalistic tendency is evinced by nearly all the higher critics of to-day, and they reflect many of the opinions of earlier critics, who find few or no divine elements in the Bible, and impair or reject essential principles of the evangelical system.

PATRIARCHIAL RECORDS DISCREDITED.

The Higher Criticism, as represented by Professor Cheyne of Oxford, discredits the stories of the patriarchal age, assuming that it was a period of illiteracy, and the art of writing being unknown, records could not have been contemporaneous with events. Hence he concludes that the biographers of Israel's ances-

tors must have lived at a time when patriarchal traditions were wholly unreliable. They were of such value as the early myths and legends of Rome, which ordinary intelligence now rejects as the rubbish of a barbaric age. In the review for August, 1889, Professor Cheyne uses this remarkable language: "We must not permit the young people after a certain age to suppose that you know, or that any one knows, or that the writers of Genesis profess to know, anything historically about the three supposed ancestors of the Israelites, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Further on he says: "I appeal to the Clergy of the national Church not to assert the very opposite of critical truth; not to treat Genesis as a collection of immensely ancient family records, when it is nothing of the kind." At all this we are amazed. Then this part of Genesis, with its hints of a Messiah, and its simple yet lofty faith, contemplating through the perspective glass of revelation, Messiah's reign, whilst laying the foundations of the Hebrew nation, God's chosen depository and conservator of the true religion until the Saviour's advent—all this is set aside as unhistoric, mythical; stories to amuse infants, not to be repeated in years of discretion.

Now observe that the argument rests on the assumption that the art of writing was unknown in the times of the Patriarchs, and contemporaneous records were therefore impossible. If this can be disproved, then the force of the criticism is broken. Can it be dis-

proved? It has been. The very stones cry out against so baseless and harmful a speculation. The Moabite stone bears witness to the literary excellence of an age which followed soon after that of Abraham, and it is reasonable to suppose the Patriarch was familiar with the culture of Babylonia, and, had it been necessary, was able to write his own biography. In the British Museum are ancient records which throw light into that distant past, and Reginald Stuart Poole, who has the care of the Antiquities of the Museum, says that it was clearly established that writing was known in and before the age of Abraham. Then, too, the stone recently discovered near the Pool of Siloam, in the Kedron valley, bears like testimony to this well accredited fact. The scholarly Sayce tells us that, "Long before the age of Abraham there were not only libraries well stocked with books on clay and papyrus, but there were numerous readers also," and adds the significant reflection that: "If the Israelites had been illiterate, living midway as they did between Assyria and Egypt, and bordering on the highly civilized cities of Phœnicia, it would have been nothing short of a miracle. That they were not so," he adds, "has now been put beyond the reach of cavil by the discovery of the Siloam inscription." (Sayce on ancient monuments, pp. 38, 39.)

The Patriarchal records written on tablets or bricks, or otherwise preserved; written in the Accadian, or some other tongue which preceded the Hebrew,

doubtless came into Abraham's hands, and were conveyed to his son; and in like manner the incidents of his eventful life may have been recorded, preserved and transmitted, until Moses received and set them in the books which bear his name.

The naturalness, the consistency, and the details of the narratives forbid the theory that they were written by uninspired hands in an age long subsequent, and are therefore unreliable. Details and their record are contemporaneous. They are not known and their record is not attempted when centuries lie between an age and its written history. The minute, lifelike records of Abraham's travels, home pictures, scenes on the plains, among his herds, beside his tree-shaded altars, and conversations with his household, his neighbors and heavenly visitants, all declare the veracity and contemporaneous origin of the sacred record. This was the view of Josephus, of the Talmud, and of the Jews in Christ's day. To refer these narratives and much of the Pentateuch, to the Maccabean age, is unwarranted. The book of Ecclesiasticus, though not part of the sacred canon, was evidently written a century before the books of the Maccabees, and makes even minute mention of the Patriarchs, as it does of the major and the so-called minor prophets. Moreover Babylonish tablets and parchments, and monuments along the Nile, now interpreted, add their confirmation to the internal evidence. These indisputable facts cut up by the roots

the hypothesis of the higher critics which obscures the biographies of Israel's great progenitors and puts out the stars of the first magnitude which shone on the plains of Mamre—stars which, marshalled by the divine hand, wrote on the sky a prophecy of Israel's greatness and of Christ's glorious coming, whose day Abraham saw and was glad.

A noted English writer, referring to the external proof furnished by the discoveries of the recent times, insists that the evidence has all gone one way. "Palestine explorations, the disinterring of Egyptian remains, and the opening out of the ruinous heaps of Assyria, Babylonia and Persia, have spoken with consentient voice. They utter their joint testimony to the historical character of the Hebrew writings." And thus God in his providence furnishes the proofs of the early origin, the Mosiac authorship, and the irrefutable veracity of the Pentateuch which Christ referred to the hand and age of the Hebrew lawgiver.

Further, let it be remarked that the Bible is not a book of abstract discussions or statements of truth. It writes the truth concretely in the life. When it would teach us what God is, the object of our search walks in the garden, appears in the theophany on the plains of Mamre, and in the burning bush. When it would teach us the value of faith, it writes the biography of Abraham; of patience, Job; of meekness, Moses; of spotless holiness, the Son of Mary. The best modern book on Christian philanthropy is the

“Life of John Howard.” The best incentive to spirituality in the ministry is the memoir of McCheyne. The best stimulus to Christian work is found in the stories of Peter Waldo, Harlan Page, and Hannah More. The power and attractiveness of the Scriptures lie largely in the personal element which is never absent, and the linking of human biography with the person and the throne of God.

But the so-called Higher Criticism is manifestly against the Scripture, since it breaks the force and authority of the Bible by discrediting much of its biography, and declaring large portions of its history apocryphal. It puts Job on canvas only—Jonah in a myth. The stories of the great fish, the withered gourd, the doomed city, are antiquated fables. It makes Daniel speak foolishness, or even questions his existence

Now one does not need to be an expert Critic in order to determine the value of such Criticism. With the English Bible before us, comparing Scripture with Scripture, accepting the testimony of the New Testament as to the originality and authority of the Old, hearkening to the very words of Christ respecting the law and the Prophets and the Psalms, and recognizing in the Cross the interpretation and fulfillment of ancient Scripture, we are prepared to form an intelligent judgment as to the truthfulness of much the Higher Criticism has taught. The humble Christian who believes in the supernatural is a safer critic than

he who pushes his rationalistic methods to the front, and with his preconceptions, born of naturalism, goes to the Bible, not to inquire respecting its claims to supernaturalism, the truthfulness of its history, the divine origin of its prophecies, the exercise of omnipotence transcending physical law, but to eliminate from the Bible whatever opposes the critic's theory, and reduce Scripture to a minimum, "rather than," as Keunen expresses it, "give up a dearly bought scientific method." The Critic's assumption of sacerdotal development, which is largely naturalism, leads him into a labyrinth of difficulties from which there is no escape but by the door of denial, and his argument in the interests of negative proof drawn from the silence of Scriptures, whilst the witness of Christ and His apostles is refused, has constrained some devout critics to halt, and then to pronounce the whole system a fraud, and such a scholar as Delitzsch to say, "Now I am separated from Wellhausen by an impassable gulf."

The scientific method does not always prove the system a science. The Higher Criticism of which much good may be said, does not at this stage of development, deserve the name. If disagreement among its friends, assumptions largely or purely hypothetical, and conclusions based on unreliable premises, are inconsistent with such a designation, then this modern criticism must be denied a place among matured sciences, and it ill becomes its advocates to con-

demn those who reject or hesitate to accept its findings, or to arrogate to themselves that wisdom which they claim is veiled to others by prejudice or stupidity.

VARIATIONS OF HIGHER CRITICISM.

The hypothesis of these higher critics has in many instances been a variable as well as a vanishing quantity. Respecting the Psalter, Wellhausen has repeatedly shifted his ground. At one time he claimed that David wrote at least fifty psalms, and that none of them were written after, and few of them so late as, Nehemiah. Again he intimates a sympathy with the critics who regard the larger part of the psaltry Post-Exilean. It was not many years since Ewald said it was preposterous to refer the Psalms to the Maccabean age. Prof. Margoliouth, of Oxford, not long ago delivered an address in which he pushed back the Post-Exilean books of certain Higher Critics to a period much earlier, and by his location of the book of Ecclesiasticus, written, as he claims, in the Rabbinical Hebrew of Ben-Sira, which was in use two centuries earlier than is generally supposed, precedes by this long period both the ancient and middle Hebrew, and so disarranges, all along the line, the chronology of other critics, and relieves serious questions concerning the earlier books of the Bible: The Critics are not agreed among themselves. Shall the Scripture and the creeds of Christendom go down before teachers so fallible as these? Nay, verily.

In view of the variations of the Higher Criticism, one school resisting another, and both shifting their grounds, yielding their positions to the force of irrefutable logic, the consensus of Christian consciousness and the testimony of ages chiseled in stones, we do well to withhold our credence from any modern critic who simply revives the ancient copy, and we are bound to discourage the publication of hypotheses which are only old enemies arrayed in new clothes.

The inductive method may cloud the faith of Christ's humble ones, break their comfort in trouble, and obscure their hope of Heaven. It may also dissipate thoughtfulness, engender disbelief, and shut the kingdom of heaven against the unregenerate, on whose souls the spirit of God is moving. When devoutly pursued it shall have reached its fulness, it will sustain the Scripture, and, as it relates to a holy faith, will nourish it. But we shrink from it when, its findings immature, it touches the greater than hemisphere of religious experience.

The appendix to an American book contains the names of the Higher Critics of to-day. It is worthy of notice that sixty per cent. of these are German scholars, and of the remaining forty per cent. the most of them, at some period, have been students in the schools of Germany. It is not to be supposed that we shall accept the present results of Old World thought which for over a century has been marching

and counter-marching on the battle grounds of the Reformation. Whilst we recognize the scholarship of Germany, and the general thoroughness of its institutions of learning, yet we do not wish to go to that mystic land for our theology, nor do we propose to adopt theories which have broken down the authority of the Bible and well-nigh destroyed spiritual life in the land of Luther. The devouter scholarship of Great Britain and America is a safer guide to our inquiries and a better support of our faith than that of Holland or Germany; the scholarship of countries that lie under the clear shining of gospel truth than of those which are obscured by the clouds of unbelief and darkened by habits of life which impair the human understanding and pervert the judgment.

RESULTS OF HIGHER CRITICISM HOW DETERMINED.

The results of the Higher Criticism will vary with the spirit in which it is pursued, and the attitude assumed to the Scripture. Some devout and conscientious critics, whose education and habits of thought have favored conservative inquiries, find abundant support of long accepted views as to the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures. Others enter on this investigation in a skeptical state of mind, taking nothing for granted until it is proven, and are controlled perhaps by a disposition to get away from traditional views and dogmatic statements, and in-

fluenced by the distinguished scholarship which has arrayed itself against prevailing faiths.

There are other critics who come to the examination of the Scriptures with opinions already formed, and all their findings are bent into the support of their preconceptions. They burn down the barriers that cross their paths, and go straight to their foregone conclusions instead, as the Christian Premier of England expresses it, of taking their chances of reaching it by the common road of reason. It often occurs that this class of critics furnish the most striking examples of discarded intelligence, and most peremptorily demand submission to their unwarranted opinions.

Then many, seeking to remove the supernatural element from the Bible, and bring it down to a purely human level, are embarrassed by the appearance of prophecy which, if its existence is admitted, determines the divine origin of the Scriptures, and they have introduced the post-exilian chronology of certain books, or some date so recent as to preclude the possibility of prophecy by making the event a fact of history when the books were written. It matters not that this hypothesis sweeps a wide field, and robs other elements of revelation of their preciousness and power. Whatever crosses the track of the cherished hypothesis must go down before its imperial march, that the "idol of the market place" may be enthroned. Some think that the age, texts, and authorship of

books, may not be vital questions, and that we may yield them without impairing the foundations of our faith. But when destructive critics, with their battle-axes, smite down both prophecy and miracle, so that they bear no testimony to the truth, and humble the cross to the grade of human reason, we refuse to keep them company.

Here let it be premised, that whilst most of the Higher Critics tend to rationalism, there are others who are unswerving in their belief in and support of the evangelical system. The latter cannot, as terms are now employed, be counted with the Higher Critics. They do not investigate the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures with a view to disprove either, but to present an antidote to the results of the destructive methods. Hence, when we speak of the Higher Criticism we have in mind the extreme, rationalistic wing, with such scholars at its head as Keunen and Wellhausen, and following them, in irregular order, such writers as Driver, Cheyne, and Gore, and those who accord with them in our own country.

Pursuing the inductive method, some of the Higher Critics tell us that the sacerdotal laws, so conspicuous in the intermediate books of the Pentateuch, are in no sense or measure Mosaic, but were a development, originating after Moses, matured after the exile, and accepted as a perfect ritual less than five hundred years before Christ.

They regard the lives of the Patriarchs as the driftwood of legends, rotting along the beach of tradition. They tell us that much of Genesis is allegorical, Job is a dream, Jonah an instructive parable, Esther a romance, Samuel, Chronicles, Ezra, and Daniel unreliable history and puerile prophecy ; that the miracles of the Exodus and of Canaan were the dreams of enthusiasts, or the creation of superstition, to be classed with ghost stories and the tales old women tell around the hearthstone on winter nights. We are informed that the Tabernacle was a myth, a bridge which traditionalists have built out of their own fertile imagination, by which they thought to make such a connection with the Pentateuch as would sustain its alleged antiquity ; that much of the prophecy of the Old Testament predictions has been reversed by history ; and the great body of the Messianic predictions not only never have been, but never can be fulfilled, for the reason that its own time has passed forever ; and then they cross the vacuity of half a century into the New Testament literature, eliminate entire passages from the synoptic Gospels, question or deny the authenticity of John, reject the second Epistle of Peter, or weaken its authority, and pronounce the Apocalypse, largely at least, an unintelligible oriental picture.

These critics are occupied with the revelations of science, with comparative religions, the sacred books of the Pagan world, the philosophies of the East, and

the records of speculation, and claim to be the representatives of advanced thought, slow of heart to believe what the prophets have written.

The Higher Criticism claims a monopoly of ideas. It tells us it has crossed all the waves of tradition, escaped the rocks of dogmatism, and anchored in the quiet haven of truth. But the day of delusions is not past. That which resists the faith of the ages ; that rejects the tried stone of inspiration ; that discredits the testimony of prophets and apostles, and the Son of God, has a momentum downward, and that only. It may dominate a few decades; the time that ideas live—that die. What we need and what what we contend for to-day, are ideas born of God, written in His Word, believed on by the generations, tested by Christian consciousness, conquering individuals and states, giving us such men as David and Isaiah, Paul and John, Luther and Knox, Henry Martyn and Adoniram Judson, and raising the nations that accept them to the pinnacles of spiritual power.

That is not truth which does not enrich and elevate the soul. All literature is valueless which does not civilize a people, leading them up to higher thoughts and grander resolves and nobler deeds ; so are all religious theories which do not lift men Godward and heavenward, bringing them out of the mists of agnosticism, and away from the flickering lights of rationalism, into the knowledge of the Word of God, and the freedom of the truth.

Skepticism is not an absolute, invariable evil. Much depends on its subject. It is right to be skeptical about spiritualism, hypnotism, theosophy, higher criticism, and all necromancy. It is right to be skeptical when occupied with natural sciences, and evidence must be strong in order to settle our opinions respecting natural laws and their results. Skepticism has also its field in religious science. But this attitude of mind may become unhealthy, and when it touches questions which relate to inspiration, and to the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures, it may throw up barriers of prejudice, pride of intellect, boast of scholarship, professional rivalry, or an ambition for notoriety, easily attained by some revolutionary hypothesis, then skepticism may prove a serious opponent of truth. The methods of science under the control of skepticism may be made to override the teachings of revelation, to set aside the testimony of universal consciousness, to destroy what fits into and fills spiritual need, secures a holy quiet of soul, and supports every effort to advance the good of men, and the glory of God.

There are skeptical Bible critics, possessed of genius, culture and piety, who are so dominated by habits of disbelief that they continually clash with the faith of Christendom, and persist in destructive speculations which threaten the very foundations of a reasonable and satisfying religious belief. It is right

to resist their methods and the conclusions to which they have come.

CLAIM TO PROGRESSIVENESS.

Higher Critics of the Rationalistic School insist on an advanced theology. They would leave the dead past and turn to a better future. But progress may be from, and not along the line of, truth. It may be shunted off on the wrong track and end in demolition. It is a significant fact that great ideas have their roots in the past, and whatever touches the religious life is an ancient and universal conviction. The belief that salvation is through sacrifice is as old as the fallen race. The flash of the Cherubim's sword reveals its cradle. And in all ages and in every land where the light of Hebrew altars had never shone, men are busied with blood-shedding, putting life between their conscious guilt and the offended divinities. We are not ashamed to be styled traditionalists in a God-given religion.

Our God, who has no past, no future, but dwells in the eternal present, gave us truth in its germ at the beginning, and laid Jesus down, wrapped in swaddling bands, just outside the gate of Eden. The growth has been that of the great original. And although truth in our day is better known, enlarging the spiritual vision, pushing on the horizon, perfecting the soul, marshalling a sacramental host and making ready for the glorious epiphany predicted by the

first promise, the first advent and the angels' song, yet Gospel truth is in its essence changeless as gravitation, as old as life and love, as joy and sorrow, as conscious need and the blessed hope.

It must be admitted that great changes are going on in the world of theological thought. In many parts of Christendom Augustine and Calvin and Edwards and the Wesleys are losing their control over the beliefs of men. Old theories are dismissed and new hypotheses claim the vacant seats. Doctrines that were drawn straight from the Word of God are referred to superstition or mental imbecility. The once-accepted facts of divine justice, a general judgment, and eternal retribution, which sent the ministry to their knees in wrestling prayer, and to their pulpits with holy trembling, and made the issues of an hour solemn as the eternity on whose margin it lay, are giving place to another gospel, and a deceptive hope. Now, in the thought of many, the love of God extrudes his justice. The gates of life are wide as the earth, and mercy announces the ultimate salvation of the race. All this has been accomplished by new theories of inspiration, which emasculated the old, by interpretations of the Scriptures which exaggerate the divine clemency, by rationalistic speculations independent of revelation, and by modern methods of Biblical Criticism, which from the beginning have tended to denial of truth, or to a corruption of it, inconsistent with a holy fear, sincere repentance and a

lifelong clinging to the person and cross of Christ. We may all believe in the infinitude of God's love, and we may discover in modern exegesis some helpful corrections of a too sombre faith; but God forbid that we should so weaken the authority, and misinterpret the teaching, and depreciate the inspiration of his word, that grace shall turn to lasciviousness, truth to deception, and an *ignis fatuus* conduct to an endless night. This is an evolution which has no warrant in the Scriptures. It does not widen the horizon of truth, but narrows it; does not quicken the conscience, but stupefies it; does not build up character, but prostrates it; does not lead to Christ, but away from him; does not bring in a better hope and expand the arithmetic of Heaven, but extinguishes the possibilities of salvation, and reduces to a minimum the number of the redeemed. Christ announces himself the only way to God, and his test of all teaching continues, "A tree is known by its fruits."

WHAT SHALL BE DONE WITH THE BIBLE ?

Now the question is raised, What will you do with your Bible? Dr. Briggs's Inaugural tells us that traditionalism is doomed. Old theories are going down before new hypotheses, as snow-banks before an April sun. What will you do? Many of us say we will keep our Bible intact. We will thrust back the axes that would girdle the tree which sheltered us, and in whose shadow our fathers sat. We will search, and

believe, and, through grace, obey the Scriptures our Lord accepted, and the later books his apostles wrote, the only infallible guide from this world to that which is to come.

Christ honored and loved the Bible of his day, It is true he condemned the Jewish interpretation of the law of Moses, the glosses they put on the testimony of the prophets, the interlineations of tradition, and the interpolations of ecclesiasticism, but he magnified the Hebrew Scriptures. They were the armory whence he drew the weapons with which to repel the tempting Satan; they were the word of life from which he gathered refulgent rays of truth as a halo of glory about his own person and mission, the penciled dawn of a Gospel day, and even "His beatitudes," as has been well said, "were Old Testament bells grouped into a sweet chime."

We are aware that some hold there were things concealed from Christ. It has even been profanely alleged that Christ knew no more about the genuineness and authenticity of the Old Testament than any simple-minded Galilean. Some of Dr. Briggs's statements in his Inaugural rest on this assumption. The Kenosis which they contend for empties him of his knowledge, and he must needs grope on through shadow and twilight into the full day of truth. He thought Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or stood in some peculiar relation to it such as made it his; he did not know. He was a traditionalist, not a scholar; an Evangelist, not

a Professor in Gamaliel's University ; none had taught him letters. Ezra equivocated and Christ was deceived.

Our Lord accepted the Canon of the Old Testament Scriptures as it was held in his time, as it had been held in ours. He was honest but not informed. Were he to appear in our day, and graduate at some of our schools, he would be one of the higher critics. That is not *our* Christ, in whom all fulness dwells. He knew the Father as he knew himself. He knew the hearts, read the thoughts, interpreted the lives of men, was familiar with all the past and forecasted all the ages to come. The testimony of Peter is familiar, "Thou knowest all things," and that of Paul, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

But many go with the destructive critics. Brilliant intellect blinds their eyes ; scholarship commands their deference ; the fear of being accounted unlearned urges them on. The darkening shadow of Oxford reaches across England. The church spires of London are obscured by it. The new world witnesses its approach. Shall the light of truth fade out and its power become a sad recession ?

Then there are others, occupying an intermediate position, who say there is some truth in the Higher Criticism. Traditionalists have held errors which Critics displace by their investigations. Authenticity may not in every instance be clearly established. Transmission has introduced a few foreign elements

into the Bible. Hence we must shift our ground. And yet we can and shall preserve the truth.

But if we yield in a few instances the claim of authenticity, and eliminate some supposed interpolations, and correct certain apparent mistakes in numbers and names, yet there are some things we cannot, some things we will not, surrender. We cannot remove the keystone of plenary inspiration and thereby destroy the whole. We cannot make the Levitical law, large portions of prophecy, and most of the Psalter, Post-exilic, preferring the testimony of the Higher Criticism to that of the Son of God. We cannot pronounce the lives of Patriarchs apocryphal, whole books eastern allegories, long-accepted prophecies, vagaries, and Christ's miracles, myths. We cannot waive supernaturalism out of history, out of experience, out of the world; nor can we maintain it within a limited area and repeatedly deny it a place in sacred records. We cannot reconstruct the Kenosis, pronounce Christ ignorant of essential facts, or throw the slightest shadow on his veracity, either as related to the sacred Canon, the office of Moses, or the truthfulness of the eschatology which sets Heaven and Hell on the horizon of an eternal future.

PERILS OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM.

There is evidently alarming peril in recent criticism. Modern cultus carries the bacilli of a moral collapse. Here cautious conservatism is better than hasty crit-

icism, and the Bible than all uncertain hypotheses combined, though they carry the stamp of acknowledged scholarship, and names we revere and love. The old London bridge is safer than the modern structure that once spanned the Tay; the plodding stage-coach than the aëronaut's balloon; the Bible than any new theology, and Elisha, who left the plow that he might be the Lord's prophet, is a more trustworthy teacher than Kuenen or any of his disciples on either side the Atlantic.

All Rationalists do not deny the possibility of a divine revelation, nor that such a revelation has been given. But the average Rationalist, according to Mansel, claims for himself and his age "the privilege of accepting or rejecting any given revelation, wholly or in part, according as it does or does not satisfy the conditions of some higher criterion to be supplied by the human consciousness." He is a higher critic. It is his mission to destroy Bibliolatry; to discover mistakes in the Bible, to deprecate its prophecies, to obscure the divine element in it, and exalt the human. The tendency of Rationalism all along the past has been to minimize the doctrines of revelation and subject them to the "Chemistry of thought." The residuum has been a system of faith less comprehensive than the Nicene formula, and even a contradiction of the apostles' creed. This is human ventriloquism drowning the voice of God.

The trend of thought in the present age is evidently

toward the same result. If dogmatism is in danger of adding human deductions to scriptural doctrines, rationalism is largely destructive and far more dangerous. It burns down so-called barriers, and enters the very citadel of truth, only to profane and overturn its altars, substituting human speculations for a divine revelation. It subjects the doctrines of Christianity to the test of reason, or of the spirit within us; to the authority enthroned in our own souls, more reliable than the authority which is outward, though it be the very voice of God. It may find the word of God contained in the Scriptures. And having eliminated what it calls "degraded types," "superstitious imaginings," and "oriental dreams," professes great reverence for what remains, whilst the vanishing quantity which is left, taken out of its proper relations, and reduced as to its true proportions, becomes practical error, and severs the nerves of a holy faith which would sit at God's feet, and with its soul vision contemplate eternal verities.

The Higher Criticism is only a modified rationalism, and its results condemn it. Criticism has its office. To deny this were folly; to reject all its results were an offence to the truth. But the criticism we accept and support is a reverential criticism: a criticism that takes the attitude of discipleship rather than that of a judge, that admits that there are mysteries in religion, that there are heights and depths that have not been explored and will require eternity to dis-

cover; a criticism that has excluded the Apocrypha from the Canon of Holy Scripture; that has removed some glosses from the legislation of the Bible; interpreted things that had been obscure; made clearer what was made known in part; and helped us to greater accuracy in determining the mind of the Spirit. The more of such criticism we have, the better. We have no fear of its conclusions. But the fruits of that irreverent, self-reliant, destructive criticism which is rationalistic, are evil only, and that continually.

The Evangelical Christianity of the early church was corrupted by the Ritualism of later centuries, and this in its turn was succeeded by Rationalism. These three have co-existed in every age. They co-exist today. But when a rationalistic criticism has been in the ascendant, evangelism has lost its power. If the Oxford tracts supported Ritualism and led to Rome, the Old Tübingen school broke the spiritual power of England, and made necessary the evangelical Whitefield and the Wesleys. The later Tübingen philosophy, with Baur at its head, and Strauss at its feet, esmaculated the doctrines of the Reformation on the Continent, and spiritual life has well-nigh departed from the lands of Luther, Zwingle and Calvin. The authority of the Bible is accepted by few. Evangelical religion is sent to the rear. The Sabbath holds a feeble place in the calendar of the year, and churches once crowded with worshipers are frequented by a dispir-

ited few. In Eisenach with its 23,000 souls, where for a time we sojourned, the old Wartburg Castle in which Luther translated the Bible looking down, only two or three per cent. of the population ever go to church, except on some national fête day, or to witness pompous, undevout services on Christmas or Easter. It is because Evangelism in Great Britain, though resisted, holds its ground against Ritualism by a hard, incessing struggle, that the Lord's day is sanctified, and places of worship are filled, and God is feared and loved by multitudes from the straits of Dover to the Pentland Hills. But the signs of the times are beginning to be ominous on that side the water, as they are on ours. We have every reason to fear that if the authority of the Scriptures should be seriously impaired or wholly broken; if systems of religion which deny an incarnated God and a vicarious atonement, and a future retribution, should be lifted to a level with Evangelical Christianity, and if Martineau be ranked as a Christian, with Spurgeon, the one taking off Christ's kingly crown, the other restoring it; the one trampling on the cross, the other bearing it aloft; the one accounting in it a symbol of shame, the other refusing to glory in anything else; the one casting out the very heart of a saving faith, the other holding all truth on the borders of heaven or hell, to one of which all are swiftly going, then it will not be long until spiritual power will depart from America, as it has

departed from the Continent of Europe, raising the inquiry, "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" Rationalistic criticism burns and blasts whatever it touches. It breaks, in the regard of all who accept its conclusions, faith in the truthfulness, necessity and authority of the sacred Scripture. Shall we accept some new, subversive theory, and relax our grasp on truth older than the pyramids, tested and believed in by every age since Abel reared his altar? Shall we surrender our position on the rock of inspiration whose summit lies "beneath the storm mark of the sky and above the flood mark of the deep," from which, with a joyful trust in the promises it has written, and supported by the hopes which it has inspired, our fathers and mothers, with their hands on our heads, and benedictions on their lips, went home to God, asking us to meet them in heaven? Surely we cannot commit an offence so destructive to our peace and to all we have esteemed above life itself.

Let us plant our faith on the Scripture, as God gave it and by His watchful providence has preserved to our day, saying with Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms, "Here I stand; I can do nothing else; so help me God. Amen." And may the Church of Jesus Christ, moved by a regard for the truth, the salvation of the lost and the comfort of saints passing through tribulation, protect from stain and mutilation the Bible, concerning which some one has said that it

is "Older than the fathers, truer than tradition, more learned than universities, more authoritative than councils, more infallible than popes, more orthodox than creeds, more powerful than ceremonies; the Omnipotent Word of God, the wonder of the world, the precious boon of heaven."



Date Due

0 15 4			
Ⓟ			



