

THE "HIGHER CRITICISM"  
and  
THE LOWER CONGREGATIONALISM

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1928

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THE "HIGHER CRITICISM"

...AND...

THE LOWER CONGREGATIONALISM.

BY A PESSIM-OPTIMIST.



THE CRUMBLING OF PLYMOUTH ROCK,  
OR  
THE DECLINE AND FALL OF CONGREGATIONALISM.



*"Faithful are the wounds of a friend." Prov. 27:6.*

The aims of this tract are to state facts, to counteract the form of infidelity that is most in vogue just now, and to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

The Puritanism of New England is vanishing. Even the word Puritan has become offensive to many. Plymouth **Plymouth Rock** Rock is going to pieces. About a hundred years ago a section of it fell away and became Unitarianism. Then soon followed Nohellianism, otherwise known as Universalism. Other smaller chunks have from time to time tumbled down from it. At present the forces of the "higher criticism" and an alleged new theology are still further disintegrating it, so that only a fragment of the original boulder remains unmoved and solid; and the fiery darts of the wicked one are constantly hurled at that.

The religious beliefs of the Puritans are too well known to require an explanation. Suffice it to say that their theology **The Puritan** was Augustinian; their polity, Congregational; **Faith.** their rule of life, the Decalogue. They accepted the essential results of the Protestant Reformation. It may be said that, as a century plant, New England Puritanism came to its crowning florescence in Jonathan Edwards, who may be regarded as the best embodiment and representative of that spiritual development. Dr. G. P. Fisher has canonized him as "the Saint of New England." On both sides of the Atlantic he has been pronounced the greatest of American thinkers. But he was a prophet at home, despised and rejected. The very poets of Massachusetts have apparently conspired to boycott him, though his career was full of scenes, incidents and events that were well calculated to delight and inspire the muse. In his stead the whole land has taken for its oracle that rambling, rhapsodic somniloquist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom nobody ever understood. To-day Edwards

is utterly repudiated by a large, undefined schism of his denominational descendants. Nohellian and other "liberal" writers are "full of cursing and bitterness" as they speak his name. When it comes to his theology not a few nominal Congregationalists, especially those east of the Hudson River, are ready to join Unitarians in the chorus, "Stone Him to Death," and to demand that the judgment and decree of the age shall be: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" The foremost and fussiest exponents of twentieth century Congregationalism are loudest and fiercest in their denunciations of every principle that he endeavored to establish with a matchless logic. His own Alma Mater has at length disowned him, except as an exalted name that adds to her fame, for not one of the active Professors in Yale Divinity School believes one word that he said, not even when he quoted Scripture.

Thus is Puritanism martyred and buried in its earliest American dwelling-place. Only in exceptional cases is it today proper for a church in that region to name itself after any place associated with the immigrants from the Mayflower, such as Pilgrim, Puritan, Plymouth, etc., for such names there are now generally historic untruths and doctrinal false pretenses.

But many good people will insist that the foregoing representation of New England Congregationalism is exaggerated,

**Proofs of the  
Accusation.**

and even libelous. They may stoutly deny that there is an infectious disease in that religious body, or rather, aggregation. Let us face some recent facts and actual conditions. First of all, consider the organs of the denomination. Formerly "The Independent" was a religious paper whose sincere and staunch purpose was the preservation and promotion of a sound Congregationalism. Now it is only a secular journal, taking pride in being non-religious and prejudiced in favor of skepticism, as is shown by its editorialesques and reviews of books. The story of two living rivals may be told in paraphrase: They separated themselves one from the other. "The Advance" dwelled in the land of orthodoxy, and "The Congregationalist" dwelled in the cities of New England, and pitched its tent toward Unitarianism. "The Outlook" is not worth mentioning in this connection, as it is a magazine created and managed on the theory that the universe is only incidental to the existence of one overweener, whose involutions, convolutions, "evolutions,"



EDWARDS BEFORE YALE.

“conceptions,” “modern thought,” etc., are the supreme phenomena and concern of the current mundane eon! The case unavoidably suggests the query: Is there something in the very essence of Congregationalism that tends to develop individualism into such an abnormal degree of self-importance and all-sufficiency as makes anarchy in theology perfectly natural?

Then behold some of the prominent Divinity Schools. The Unitarians stole Harvard from the Trinitarians some decades ago, and made of it a pretentious place where young men are only unfitted to be “good servants of Jesus Christ.” Poor Andover has been “liberalized” to death, so that for several years that Seminary has hardly had more students than instructors. Shades of Moses Stuart! how has the mighty fallen! If Yale is as yet somewhat higher up the declivity, she is gliding down with increasing speed. Her fondest hobnobbing is with the Nohellians and Unitarians of eastern Massachusetts and elsewhere. The old fogies of such places as Princeton are evidently distasteful to and disrespected by the coterie of mutual admirers who have recently taken the vacated chairs of Drs. Fisher, Day and others of equal learning and prudence. She seems to aspire to be the see and centre of the “new theology,” which one of her recent graduates has defined as follows: “The exact content of the term ‘modern theology’ is difficult to define. The chief accusations of its opponents are, however, that it does not uphold the total depravity of human nature and inability of the ethnic religions, the material nature of Heaven and Hell, the impossibility of salvation hereafter for those who have not heard Christ preached here, the necessity of a sacrificial atonement to appease God’s justice, and an inerrant Bible” (Yale Divinity Quarterly, Dec., 1904, p. 87). The present indications are that within the next thirty years Yale will have as small a Christ as Harvard, as small a sin as Mary B. G. Eddy, as small a hell as Tufts, and a Bible small enough for Professor Schmiedel’s disciples to carry “reverently” in their vest-pockets with their snuff-boxes. The “evolution” is in that direction. O, return to the sacred and spacious house of your fathers, ye wayward and wanton sons of Yale! Ye are now feeding on husks, and wasting your grand inheritance on the untrue and the unclean. May the Puritans’ gracious God forgive you, and restore your souls.



Since Union Seminary became independent, "creedless" and irresponsible, she is to all intents and purposes a Congregational institution, constructed and operated on the plan of Harvard Divinity School. Her history and prestige may for a time inveigle some orthodox students into her halls. But her graduates will hereafter be found going less and less to creed-respecting churches, and more and more to "broad" societies. Looking back along the vista of years one gazes upon the venerable forms of Robinson, Smith, Hitchcock, Schaff, Shedd and others, then heaves a sigh and drops a silent tear.

Naturally, if the top of the Congregational tree is withering, the lower branches will indicate a blight. And such is the case. The Year-Book has shown an alarming diminution in accessions to the churches since the dawn of this century. But that is no wonder when so many pastors do not believe in revivals, except of a namby pamby kind. Should a real Preacher like Charles G. Finney appear among them in this year of grace many of them would be scared into fits. That unturned, half-baked cake (Hos. 7:8-9), Dr. W. J. Dawson, is all they can stand in these degenerate days. Candidates for the pulpit are becoming fewer and fewer. When Pres. W. R. Harper of Chicago was discussing the reasons for this declension, some months ago, it did not seem to have occurred to him that one of the leading causes of the calamity is the view of the Holy Scriptures that he himself has been advocating for some time. The "higher criticism" and the "new theology" leave no motive whatever for a Christian ministry. Doctors Jekyll and Messrs. Hyde—men whose inward belief is unbelief, and whose professional belief is a make-belief—are already too numerous back of the sacred desk. When the Congregational ranks receive the refugees, malcontents, creed-kickers and fizzlers of other denominations, they generally lose more than they gain. Thus, the heirs of the Puritans are in a demoralized and deplorable condition. There would be more hope for them if they were not at the same time in the condition of an ancient church which said: "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). They will do well if they give very serious thought to the remainder of the verse.

## THE "HIGHER CRITICS" CRITICIZED.

As the "higher criticism," still more vitiated from the circumfluent air of an adjacent Unitarianism, Nohellianism and agnosticism, has hitherto harmed Congregationalism more than any other distinct form of Christianity in the United States, it behooves us to further consider that fact which is now having its day. It is noticeable that the words infidelity, free thought, skepticism, and even rationalism, are not now used nearly as much as they were twenty or more years ago. The reason is that those words have all merged in the one term "higher criticism." Until recently that term was generic, and was free from a bad meaning. Gradually, as it was applied more and more to the radical and destructive criticism, and less and less to the conservative and constructive criticism, it settled down to a general theory which contends that the Bible should be treated like any other book, only more so; that the Bible is not inspired in any unique sense that makes it superhuman, reliable and authoritative; that the Bible must be subject to the tests of human reason; that all plans of interpreting the Bible must be so made as to exclude the supernatural and the miraculous; that when sacred history and profane history conflict, the invariable presumption should be that the Bible is the "errant" document. Such contentions are simply preposterous, and justify somewhat detailed strictures on those who have the audacity to make them.

The "higher critics" brag too much. They constitute themselves into a mutual magnifying association, and then **The "Critics" Too Boastful.** never hesitate to boom, boost and advertise one another. As reviewers they write each other's books up, away up, and all dissenting books down, away down. They ignore the treasuries of knowledge that antedate their advent, and belittle every living investigator and thinker who doubts or rejects their postulates and conclusions. They assume that the "views" of a few individual "scholars," ycleped "critics," are sufficient to reverse the decisions of all the historic Councils, to undo and level the massive edifices constructed by the giants of the Reformation, and to set at naught the fruitage of the marvelous Biblical researches that developed between that Awakening and the present time. Nonsense! Christendom has not bodily accepted the ancient novelties of the "higher critics." The

millions of the Greek Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Methodist Church, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church, the Episcopal Church, do not suffer appreciably from the old disease of the "new theology." The boasting aforesaid is more an exhibition of ignorance and self-conceit than of anything else. It is simply not true that a majority of the great Biblical scholars are "higher critics."



DIDELPHYS ALTIOR CRITICA.

They are too dogmatic. Of course, they are constantly denouncing dogma and dogmatism. But that does not keep them from being most lavish with their own ipse dixits. With what nonchalance they will supply missing links from their convenient imaginations, assuming that because *they* do so it must be scientific and con-

**Too Many  
Iipse Dixits.**

clusive. They will proclaim a supposition that annihilates the historicity of Biblical books, and revolutionizes the interpretation of prophecies, Gospels and Epistles without anything worthy of the word *Proof*. They will do it all on the strength of some sensational professor's fickle hypothesis, or flimsy conjecture. They quote quoters of quoted quotations, and become indignant at everybody who may refuse to swallow their unwarranted deductions.

Were it not a very serious matter, it would be amusing to observe how that, now-a-days, the brood of students in a "liberal" Divinity School attach themselves, with "implicit faith," to the back of their parent, suggestive of the peculiarities of the didelphys. When they graduate honest, innocent churches call those spruce young men to become their pastors. Without much delay the new ministers proceed to tell their benighted parishioners what an absurd thing the "traditional view" is; how "modern scholarship" has brushed its "medieval" cobwebs away, and solved the "problems" that have baffled the ages; and how "constructive" and "reverent" are those "critics" who take delight in standing before the burning Bush with their cowhide boots on, and in slashing the sacred scrolls with "scientific" butcher-knives. The result is that hitherto healthy congregations are at first bewildered, then inoculated with universal doubt, until at last nothing is left of them but social clubs, or associations for ethical culture. The fewer adherents such seminaries have on their spines the better.

The way they speak of "scholarship" is often absurd. There are spheres in which it is not possible for modern

**A Wrong View of Scholarship.** scholars to know more than earlier scholars. On the other hand, investigations in some corners of the Bible are still only preliminary, partial and progressive. In the latter case it would be unreasonable to accept tentative and fragmentary guesses as infallible and final conclusions. And then pedantry is not erudition. To give to discussions of manuscripts and texts the appearance of algebraic solutions is no sign of scholarship. A sort of catalogue familiarity with the names and works of Continental critics is not, as such, scholarship, any more than a similar familiarity with the names and writings of the Schoolmen and Jewish Talmudists would be scholarship. It has been for years a

common practice for specialists to talk with assumed authority beyond the limits of their specialties, and nothing has suffered more from that habit than the Holy Scriptures. Between 1870 and 1880 the fad word was "Scientist," and a physical scientist was then supposed to be able to settle all questions in heaven and on earth. For instance, a distinguished chemist—that, and nothing more—would be engaged by a publishing house to write a "critical" volume on some period of Jewish history, or, perchance, on the Pauline soteriology! In our day the fad word is "scholar." The "higher critics" insist that the Great Man belongs wholly to them. And he is represented as being sufficient for all things, even outside of the nook that he is most familiar with, just as the "scientist" was thirty years ago.

They disregard the fundamental principles and the standard rules of evidence. If they should spend two or three

**They Ignore** years in the study of such works as **Scientific Evidence.** Greenleaf or Best on Evidence, their writings might be less contemptible in the eyes of readers with logical minds and a legal training. Their fatal defects are usually the following: (a) They forget that the axiomatic presumption is in favor of the validity of the traditional view of the Bible, and that only by competent, relevant and sufficient evidence can that presumption be overcome. (b) They frequently receive and rely on naked hearsay. (c) They habitually take for facts points not proved. (d) They persist in giving to bald opinions the weight of established facts. (e) They introduce and recognize as experts men who have not qualified as such, or men whose expert character is doubted or rejected by everybody excepting those who produce them. Such flagrant violations of the elementary canons of evidence are inconsistent and inexcusable in those who are all the time harping on the importance of being logical and scientific. Some of the present instructors in Yale Divinity School are notoriously deficient right here.

They express a contempt for the conservative method in Biblical research, although that method is considered best

**Their Method** elsewhere. The conservative physician is becoming more respected within and outside of **Exceptional.** his profession. The surgeon who prides himself on being "heroic" and hasty with his knife is in growing disfavor. But

when it comes to the Divine Oracles the readiest and the roughest mangle is by a certain set pronounced the most "up-to-date" and "courageous" of saw-bones. "Frenzied finance" is in very bad repute just now. The "plunger" is looked upon with abhorrence. But in the matter of "handling the word of God" (2 Cor. 4:2) the plunger is the favorite, admired and applauded by many. The operator in crazy criticism is dubbed "the Napoleon of Modern Scholarship!" In education, diplomacy, legislation, enforcement of law, church discipline, corporate management, *Conservatism* is the watch-word of sanity and safety. Why should Biblical Criticism be the victim of an exception to the general rule?

They adopt a modus operandi that would not be practicable and tolerable in any other department of civilized human life. Their method applied to architecture would disjoint and ruin every celebrated building on the face of the globe. Their method applied to literature would make a rag-carpet of the Iliad, and reduce Shakespeare's Plays to "crazy-quilts." Their method applied to real estate holdings would disquiet the title of every lot in the cities of the earth. Their method applied in archives and to public records would convert all history into a mass of myths, tales, traditions, stories. Their method applied to pedigrees would leave the legitimacy of all kings and princes doubtful and debatable. Their method applied to law would disturb the decisions of all courts, and make legal proceedings futile. If you must question, revise, overhaul, verify everything that pertains to the Bible, why not make the same demand as to all other things, and see where you would land?

Many of the "higher critics" are subject to a mental disorder that may be called Germanolatry, which may be defined as a blind faith in, a servile deference to, and an obsequious acceptance of the notions and opinions of German Rationalists. When American or British theologues go to Continental Universities to "finish their education," some of them return to their homes feeling that they must have something extraordinary to show for their sojourn abroad. Too often that showing will consist of a disrespect for the religious beliefs and ways of their own countrymen, and (if they write something for publication, which they are pretty sure to do), of very copious references

to German authorities, given in the original language, of course. Verily, the sycophancy, superstition and gullibility of some English-speaking "scholars" in the presence of German "critics" is pitiable and humiliating. Alas! that Americans are the most abject of their worshipers!

#### CONSEQUENT DUTIES.

The situation calls for action—a line of resolute and persistent action. A war to the death is on, which implies that excessive politeness and toleration may be equivalent to cow-



WORSHIPING A GERMAN CRITIC.

ardice and disloyalty. "Resist the devil." Strike back at the invading foe. Never be afraid to hurt an assailant of your King. Let no theological seminary in which is an instructor given to sneering at the "traditional view" of the Holy Scriptures receive the advantages of the traditional view

as to its present character, but rather let it be doubted and shunned when it comes to placing a student for the ministry. Consider the probable superiority of the more modest divinity schools whose Professors are less likely to be suffering from an itching ambition to receive public attention, or to be jollied or hired by publishers to prepare for projected series volumes of a uniform size and flavor. Young men that lean to a "liberal" seminary had better be persuaded to enter some other profession, for they will only do more harm than good as reputed clergymen. One of the banes of the day in divinity schools is professional professors, to make critics, instead of prophets to teach and inspire prophets. The crying need of the church and the world to-day is of *Preachers*, PREACHERS, PREACHERS. Faithless weaklings that can at best only read sermonettes and give "talks" are sheer mockery. As things are, churches with certain environments will do well to be very careful when about to call recent graduates, lest they are fooled into getting "new theologians"—which is synonymous with *no* theologians—instead of "good ministers of Christ Jesus, nourished in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6). This admonition should have special weight in these years, when a Protestant minister comes to his dead-line at fifty, and when veal, yea, even bob-veal, is preferred to mature beefsteak in the pulpit.

When it comes to selecting books and papers to aid Sunday School teachers and scholars never was such vigilance required as at present, for some of the destructive critics are like cuckoos, given to the lazy, stingy and mean trick of laying their eggs in nests built by other birds, and then of letting the other birds hatch their eggs and feed their chicks. Beware of the advertisements of unknown or dubious concerns, even though they appear in orthodox papers. Evangelical Christians had better stick to their own denominational publications, and reject every "broad," "liberal" and "advanced" solicitor for their patronage.

Scrutinize those who may be selected to address gatherings of promiscuous believers, adult or youthful, and beware of the treacherous ingrate who, though ostensibly of one of the tribes of Israel, is always on the lookout for a chance to play to the galleries of the Philistines and Gadarenes.



Unitarians\* who deny the personality of the Holy Spirit and the divinity of Jesus Christ are no more Christians than are modern Hebrews or Mohammedans, and Trinitarians should firmly refuse to recognize them as such. It will be said that many fine men are Unitarians. Granted. That proves nothing as to their religious tenets. Not a few Buddhists, Confucians, Zoroastrians, Agnostics, Atheists, &c., are equally fine men. And if Unitarians have said much in praise of the character and teachings of Jesus, so have the Koran, its expounders, and numerous Jewish Rabbis. The New Testament certainly excludes categorical and deliberate Unitarians from the pale of Christianity (John 5:18; 10:33-9; 19:7; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 John 4:15). It paralyzes an individual, a church and a seminary to associate and affiliate with them.

Many religious teachers need a "quickened conscience" to apply to their work. Quite a sensation has been made lately about the "tainted money" of a lay capitalist. But what about the tainted gospel and the corrupted theology of an ordained preacher! Which is wickeder in the sight of God? Dr. Washington Gladden, and all others of his way of discoursing and writing, should give sober thought to these questions.

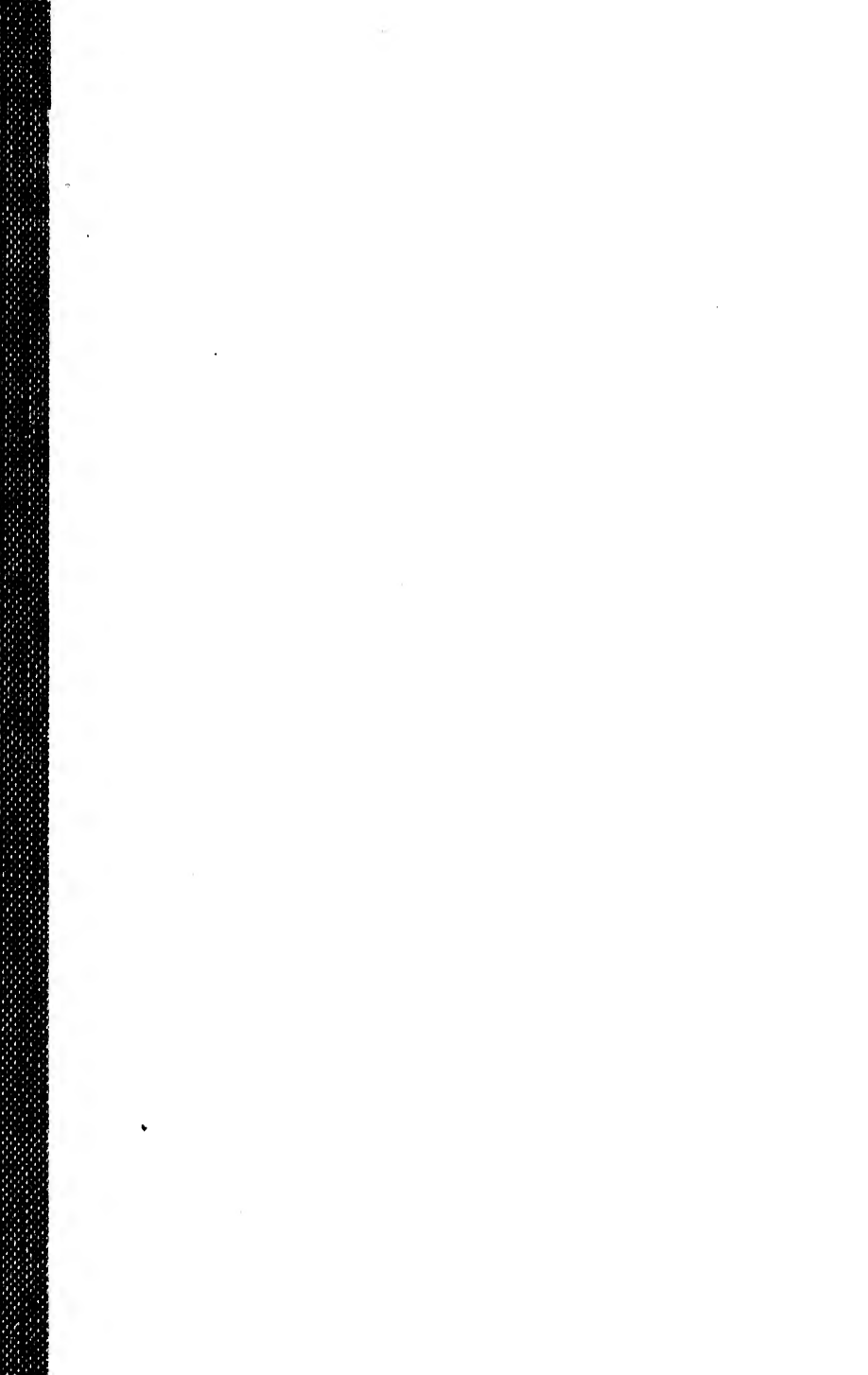
But thanks be to God, a substantial remnant of Plymouth Rock is standing yet! In other words, there is a wing of Congregationalists who have not departed from the truth. With that wing may be found thousands of sincere believers in the Redeemer, hundreds of his worthy ministers, and several sound weeklies, and one or two anchored quarterlies. Their chief danger lies in their constant exposure to the influences of their fallen or falling brethren. This calls upon them to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation, and to fight the good fight of faith, inwardly and outwardly. On them depends the future of Congregationalism. If they continue faithful, Puritanism may be more in America than a chapter in the early history of the United States. But if they surrender to the enemy, let them no longer speak or sing of "Our fathers' God," for him they then will have ceased to know. As to the imaginary God of the "new theology," he

\*The term should here include the Nohellians, as is clearly shown by their latest Hymn-book, in which scores of the noble stanzas of orthodox hymn-writers are found dishonestly and ruthlessly changed, garbled, mutilated and "sissyfied," so that they are hardly recognizable, and so that the authors are made to say what they would have died rather than utter.

is a sort of "Miss Nancy" that is not worth knowing. Away, away forever, with the "modern conception" that would foist such a vanity on needy men, instead of the great and all-sufficient God whom the profound and devout Puritans defined as "a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth."

My unpleasant task is done. It makes no difference whatever *who* the writer may be. The only question of importance is, Are the contents of his tract substantially true? Sectarian interests, personal pride, and inability to know and realize the actual state of things, will cause many to answer, No. Sympathizers with the radical critics should not, at any rate, find fault with it because it is nameless, for they assert that almost every book in the Bible—which they "revere," we are often told—is either anonymous or "pseudonymous."

Well, may we have no more second hand cavils and quibbles. Let us all get back to the Pauline consecration, the Pauline gospel, and the Pauline method. Then will our eyes behold the King in his beauty, Zion putting on her graceful strength, while the teeming nations flock as doves to her illumined windows, and the death of Doubt is swallowed up in the universal victory of a living Faith.



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The "higher criticism" and the lower

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