

expended in the endeavour to dissect the human authorship of separate books of the Bible ; and that its organic unity is too persistently overlooked. Our forefathers may have been too prone to interpret passages in one writer by passages in another, without allowing for differences of use and style. But this is no reason why we should err in the opposite extreme.

At present the chief end of critical exegesis of Scripture seems to be to place the reader in the exact standpoint of the writer. Really to do this is impossible. Only by the most exact and careful study of antiquity can we make any approximation to the mental position and the surroundings of men, the last of whom wrote some eighteen centuries ago ; and the first, some fifteen centuries earlier still. If certainty as to the meaning of Holy Scripture can only be obtained by reverting to the condition of its human authors, we must simply wait for the resurrection of the dead. But is this the best way to reach the meaning ? The very persons who pursue the search most ardently are the first to tell us that it is not. When we ask them for the spiritual teaching of that which they have dissected, they are as helpless as ourselves. We are in the case described by Isaiah (ch. xxix. 11, &c.), with but slight difference. "The vision of all has become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed." Deliver it to the learned, and after all their critical analysis, when asked to give *the meaning*, they say, "I cannot, for it is sealed." But if the rest of us are asked to interpret it, without the aid of historical criticism, we are expected to say, "I am not learned." The critics too often reject the received Christian interpretation. We, in turn, reject their verbal dissection. Between us both, what are the multitude of plain and simple folk to do ?

I cannot but feel that the destructive one-sidedness of modern criticism is largely responsible for this state of things. And in particular I refer to the practice of resting the authority and interpretation of Scripture on the human authorship ; and making the authorship itself depend almost entirely upon the vocabulary of the books.