

Reviews.

THE HIGHER CRITICISM. By REV. F. R. BEATTIE, PH.D., D.D.
Toronto: William Briggs. 1888.

This is a neat pamphlet of fifty-six pages, containing a paper originally read before the Brantford Ministerial Alliance. The alternative title, "Modern Critical Theories as to the Origin and Contents of the Literature and Religion found in the Holy Scriptures," more fully expresses the purport of the work. The term Higher Criticism, as the author points out, is applied to that science which examines the several books contained in the Canon of Scripture, in order to determine their authenticity and genuineness. This necessarily is a science of a historico-critical character, having a thoroughly legitimate sphere. This work, however, confines itself to the views of a certain class of critics in that field, who certainly are ready enough to arrogate to themselves exclusively the position of exponents of Higher Criticism, but whose claim even the title of a work should hardly seem to recognize. More particularly, though not exclusively, the author has in view that theory of the Pentateuch, associated with the names of Graf, Wellhausen and others, according to which it is composed of a number of distinct narratives, which first took form in different ages.

The work is written in a clear, easy style, and though it is necessarily very brief on each point, yet the brevity does not lead to obscurity. The subject is divided into four sections, in which successively are contained a short history of the movement, an exposition of its principles and methods, a critical examination, and an estimate of its import and results. In the exposition of the principles of advanced criticism, the author emphasizes the doctrines of Hegelian philosophy, the denial of the supernatural, the rejection of inspiration, and the theory of a natural evolution in the religion of the Bible, as presuppositions underlying the methods of the critics. He is careful to point out that a number of the school professedly refuse to accept some of these presuppositions, though he considers that they do so at the expense of consistency and logic. This, however, we think is open to question. The fact that such principles are held by many advanced critics does not imply that the whole system is necessarily bound up with them. Many scholars attach a measure of validity to some of the conclusions reached, who would utterly repudiate any sympathy with rationalistic views. The fact of inspiration, and the reality of the supernatural in the Bible are rather conclusions logically reached after Higher Criticism has done its own proper work, than presuppositions whose denial or avowal should influence its method.