

and of forgetting that there is any higher realm, so he who concerns himself exclusively with the literary side of the Bible is in danger of exalting this to such preponderance as to overlook the fact that it has another aspect, and that as the Word of God it is not only entitled to be treated with peculiar reverence, but to be regarded as the supreme rule of faith and duty. The fallacy consists in treating the Bible as a purely literary product, and its study as a mere branch of literature. Its divine origin and authority may not be in terms denied, but they may be so entirely left out of sight and so wholly without influence, even in the consideration of questions in which it is necessarily involved, as practically to amount to a denial. The Bible has a human side, but it is not a purely human book. And to treat it as such is as though one were to deal with Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Newton's "Principia" as the productions of a child, and to pare them down to the level of what was possible with such an origin.

The critical hypothesis of the gradual formation of the Old Testament canon in successive steps corresponding to the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible, and separated from each other by long periods of time, is based on this purely literary conception of the books. It is assumed that these were not from the outset distinguished from all other books as the product of divine inspiration, nor written with the design of forming part of the rule of faith of God's people, but that in later ages a sacredness and authority came to be attributed to them which they did not possess from the beginning.

The same conception also underlies the changed attitude which it is proposed in critical quarters should be taken in respect to the Bible. Inasmuch as the writers of the Bible were men, and to err is human, it is assumed that the Bible must have its mistakes, such as are to be expected in every human production.

The lines of evidence upon which the Higher Criticism relies for its conclusions are perhaps nowhere more fully or clearly stated than by Dr. Briggs in his "Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch," p. 4. Little exception can be taken to them in the guarded form in which he presents them. But the manner in which they are in fact applied and the conclusions deduced from them indicate a wide discrepancy between the verbal statement and the actual practice. One is reminded of what Jerome says of the figurative style of elevated poetry, that it says one thing and means another, and is as slippery as an eel: the more tightly you grasp it, the more quickly it will slip away. Or of Bunyan's quaint description of the waterman, who looks one way and rows another. A number of the fallacies, of which we are in quest, may be grouped in connection with these rules, of which they are the loose or faulty application. The canons of criticism as laid down by Dr. Briggs will first be stated in his own language, and then the fallacies involved in the use made of them by the critics will be pointed out.