

is interrogated and light sought from every possible quarter; and the result of such investigations properly conducted is to open the way for a clearer comprehension and a juster appreciation of the works in question by placing the modern reader as nearly as possible in the position of those to whom they first came, and thus affording him a better insight into the minds of the writers. But the benefit of the study depends entirely upon the accuracy with which this preliminary investigation is made. If the reasonings are fallacious and the conclusions false, it must obscure and cloud—it may even utterly pervert the meaning of the author by putting what he has written in wrong connections, and considering it from an erroneous point of view; or it may mutilate and destroy his work by tearing it asunder, corrupting its text, or casting unjust and unfounded suspicions upon its genuineness and authenticity.

Some very astounding conclusions have been announced of late in the name of the Higher Criticism of the Scriptures. And on this basis the Christian world has been challenged to abandon the ground which they have so long and so tenaciously held, to revolutionize their opinions as to the facts of the Bible, and to amend their creed. Before accepting this challenge it is no unfair inquiry whether these conclusions are veritable additions to our knowledge and to be welcomed as helps to the true understanding of the Word of God. Are they signal lights by which we may safely guide our way, or a deceptive *ignis fatuus*, flaming only to lead us to destruction? It is bringing no railing accusation against the Higher Criticism in itself considered to charge mistakes upon those who have practiced it, and to point out the wrong methods which have been pursued. Fallacious reasoning will necessarily lead the critic astray, however good his intentions, however sincere his convictions, and however admirable his personal character. These do not come into the account when the question is as to the tendencies of a system or the grounds upon which it rests. The excellence of the man is not always a sure voucher for the accuracy of his logic. The plain fact is that the revolutionary statements put forth as the ascertained results of Higher Criticism have no other foundation than fallacies of higher critics. Some of these will here be adverted to as the limited space allotted to this article will allow.

The most comprehensive and fundamental of all relates to the proper domain and function of the Higher Criticism as applied to the Scriptures. It deals with literature as such, and occupies itself with purely literary questions. Thus De Wette in defining the scientific character of this department of learning says: * “The Bible is to be considered as a historical phenomenon in a series with other such phenomena and entirely subject to the laws of historical inquiry.” As the physicist, who deals solely with the laws that govern material things, is in danger of imagining that everything is explicable from these laws

* Histor.-krit. Einleitung, § 4.