

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXIII.—APRIL, 1892.—NO. 4.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—IS THE HIGHER CRITICISM SCIENTIFIC?

BY PROFESSOR FRANCIS BROWN, D.D., NEW YORK CITY.

To this question Professor Robert Watts, of Belfast, has given a decided answer in the negative.* If the Higher Criticism were what he appears to think it is, and if it pursued the method he appears to think it pursues, there would be no occasion for this article. What he asserts is a process that aims to disprove "the plenary verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," and that advances to this end by taking as "its chief, its fundamental *à priori* principle" "that miracle, in any shape or form, is impossible;" by "minimizing the positive evidence of verbal inspiration and magnifying the counter testimony," assuming further, at the same time, "that such intervention of the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit as the verbal theory demands would be destructive of the freedom of the sacred writers, and would transform them into mere 'automaton compositors.'" How far Dr. Watts succeeds in exposing the error of this method and the inherent vice of this process need not be here discussed; for whatever the process may be, it is not Higher Criticism, and whatever the method, it is not that which the Higher Criticism pursues. The Higher Criticism is quite a different thing, has quite a different aim, and seeks to approach it by quite a different path.

I. The Higher Criticism deals with the human element in the Bible, and with that under certain aspects only. It has to do simply and only with the literary problems furnished in the Bible. It aims to learn the structure and authorship of the different books, to study the literary form of the Bible as distinguished from other biblical matters. It is not occupied with determining the exact meaning of Scripture—this is the province of exegesis. It does not construct narrative on the basis of the statements of Scripture—that would be biblical history. It does not seek to learn the religious teachings of the Bible in their historical setting and their original relations—that belongs to biblical theology. Still less does it

* HOMILETIC REVIEW, January, 1892, pp. 12 sqq.