

THE HIGHER CRITICISM,

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Permit me at the outset to enter a protest against the use of the word *higher* in connection with the criticism we are now about to consider. "Higher" criticism suggests that there are other criticisms, inferentially of a lower and less important kind, from which the so-called "higher" criticism ought to be carefully distinguished. If I might venture to move an amendment it would be to substitute the word *speculative* for the word *higher*. This would give us a nomenclature that would have some considerable correspondence with methods and results into which the speculative and hypothetical so largely enter.

At present the higher criticism is principally concerned with the Old Testament. By a close examination of the various books, and by comparing book with book and part with part where comparison is believed to be possible, it is sought to determine the genesis of each. In reaching conclusions, tradition as to authorship, not otherwise supported, has but little weight. The style of the writer, the use of words and phrases which indicate an early or later stage of the Hebrew language : surroundings political, ecclesiastical, ethnological and geographical, as far as they can be ascertained, are taken into account, and as far as they go, aid in the formation of the critical judgment.

As there is no contemporary Hebrew literature with which the Old Testament writings can be compared, it might seem at first sight as though the researches of the higher critics were of academical rather than of direct and present theological interest. Such, however, is far from being the case. The critics have discovered an "idealizing element" running through records which we and our fathers believed to be the inspired Word of God ; and they have suggested questions the solution of which seems incompatible with that simple faith in the truth of the narrative which has been the traditional belief of the church of God from generation to generation. Nor is this all. Even the knowledge of Him who is the Word and Wisdom of God, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, even His knowledge *as a man* has not escaped the questioning and the speculations of the "Higher Criticism." . . .