

Our Contributors.

The Higher Criticism.

MR. EDITOR: Reading a production of a higher critic I was attracted by these sentences, "Has Christ any where given a deliberate decision on such questions? The question is not, Did he hold certain opinions on these matters? What specially attracted me was the clause, "Did he hold certain opinions on these matters." The expression seems peculiar and set me a thinking and perhaps you will allow me to present, through your paper, the results.

It will be noticed that the critic balances against one another the phrases "Deliberate decision" and certain opinions." The matter in question is the critical, opposed, to the conservative view of Scripture, and the point the critic seeks to establish is that on that question our Saviour gave no "Deliberate decision" whilst he held "Certain opinions." The suggestion is a startling one to a follower of Jesus Christ, that of him having "Certain opinions" which his followers may properly disregard, may refuse to allow them any weight, that altho' they were very clearly defined opinions, on so all important a matter as, the value of the Bible as the word of God. The suggestion is a very startling one and from its profound importance worthy of earnest consideration.

One consideration begins with the admission of the critic that our Saviour had "Certain opinions" as to the Bible and its claim to be the word of God. These opinions, on the whole, he allows to be what are now termed the conservative view of the Bible, the view that regards the Bible as historically true, that absolutely negatives the critical representation. The critic acknowledges that Christ held this opinion. But, he adds, it was *his* opinion, only his *opinion*.

That sets us to the consideration of the word "opinion." It has two meanings, which we shall endeavor shortly to state, with their effect upon the critical representation. The first is, when one acknowledges his views to be only his *opinions*. That is, he admits his views are not well enough defined for him to insist upon their acceptance by others. Nay, so far is he from insisting upon their acceptance by others, he intimates that he is ready to change his views, should any one shew good cause for his doing so. Such the critic would have us believe was Christ's position as to his own views of Scripture. They were his opinion, which he could not enforce upon others and was ready to change, could good cause be shewn for his doing so. To us this is blasphemous. The critic denies that it is. We think we can shew it is. But the question at present is as to its correctness, and we have to ask, is that representation supported by our Saviour's manner of dealing with Scripture? Is his manner of dealing with Scripture such as to give no "Deliberate decision" on the "Literary and historical problems," raised by the Higher Criticism? On this we have two things to say. The first thing we would say is, How could a "Deliberate decision" be given upon questions that had not been raised! The suggestion is so absorbing that those who have not read the critic must imagine that we are misrepresenting him. But we are not. It is really with regard to those problems that were unknown till almost our own day, the critic says that, Christ has given me "Deliberate decision." How the critic could perpetuate such an outrage on common sense, we leave his readers to surmise. The second thing we would say is that it is no less an outrage upon truth to represent our Sav-

our's pronouncement upon Scripture as being but the expression of his opinion in the present sense of that word. If there is anything in which our Saviour has given no "Deliberate decision," it is as to the value of the Scriptures. We positively affirm having regard to our Saviour's attitude to Scripture as that is represented in the gospels, that the man is under a bias, powerful enough to deflect him from the truth, who would connect with our Saviour's expressed views upon Scripture, the word *opinion*. No unprejudiced reader of Scripture can peruse our Saviour's pronouncements upon Scripture without being compelled to recognise that he has given a very deliberate decision as to its value. Who can recall his numerous and matter of course quotations from the Scriptures without seeing the horrible incongruity of using the word 'opinion,' that is, in the sense in which we are now dealing with it. Who can read about the Queen of Sheba coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon, about Solomon in all his glory, not being so glorious as a flower of the field, about its being more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for the cities favoured by our Saviour's ministry, about the warning sharpened by references to Noah and Lot, about the references to Elijah and Jonah and Nineveh, and so on, without being forced to recognise that the man is not dealing fairly with his subject who connects with our Saviour's view of Scripture the word *opinion*. But there is more than that to be said. Our Saviour, not only in his matter of course allusion to Scripture, but in the manner of his quotations gives very 'Deliberate decision' as to his views of Scripture, a decision such as to bind all his followers to the same views, as it has bound his church through all the centuries of its existence. There are three very notable expressions of our Saviour, in quoting from Scripture, each of which is an absolute determination of the value of Scripture, for himself and for all his followers. One is the expression "It is written." The force of that expression is that it determines every utterance, to which it is attached, to be of Divine authority. But that means that every pronouncement in Scripture is of Divine authority. For when our Saviour uses the expression, he is referring to Scripture from Genesis to Malachi. We know that that is his reference. So that our Saviour so far from not having given a "deliberate decision" positively asserts the infallible authority of the Scriptures from its first to its last word. To the same effect only with increased emphasis is his expression, "The Scriptures cannot be broken." That means, the Scripture in Genesis cannot be broken, nor in Exodus, nor Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and so on through the Law, the prophets and the psalms. It is to be noticed that this assertion is made in a connection that demonstrates its universal application to Scripture. Had it been in connection with something fundamental in religion and morals, the criticism might have claimed that that determined the region in which it was applicable. But it cannot be so limited, being used in connection with the saying in one of the psalms, "I said ye are gods." Using it in such a connection surely our Saviour gives a very deliberate decision with regard to the value of Scripture, and a decision of such a nature that it must be applicable to all generations. Not less positive is the third expression. Nay, in it our Saviour's testimony to Scripture reaches its climax. It is when in reference to some quotation he uses the introduction "God said" or "the Holy Ghost spoke." What an awful incongruity were

Christ merely giving his opinion would that language afford. Nay, the use of it in that case were an impossibility or a blasphemy. In it Christ determines for all time what Scripture is to himself and to all his true followers. And how admirably in accord with that is his remarkable testimony to Scripture in the words "If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded through one rose from the dead." What must Scripture be when its testimony surpasses that of one risen from the dead.

Truly it has been demonstrated that it is nothing less than an outrage upon the truth to suggest that our Saviour has not given decision as to the value of Scripture, but that he held his views as being only his opinion. But there is something further to be said even more decisive than what has been said. Our Saviour set his seal upon Scripture: not only by what he said with regard to it, but by what he did. It was in accordance with his obedience to Scripture as the Word of God that he gave himself to sorrow and death. Repeatedly we have him telling his disciples of his suffering and death and resurrection, and after his resurrection we have him expounding the Scriptures from Moses to all the prophets that the Christ ought to suffer these things and enter into his glory. Nor is it possible in view of this to speak of Christ's views of Scripture as his opinion. Is there not a flagrant sacrifice of truth in such a suggestion? Is not, without question, the proper representation, that Christ has set the seal of a very deliberate decision upon Scripture, as being from its beginning to its end the infallible Word of God, and in doing so has determined for all time how the Scripture is to be viewed by those who would be his followers.

So much for the critical use of the word 'opinion,' in the sense it has when one calls his views his opinions, meaning that he is not prepared to force them upon others and is ready to change them if ground for doing so is presented. It is sufficiently evident that the word opinion, in that sense cannot be employed to designate our Saviour's views on Scripture. Neither can it be employed in the other sense of the word. That sense is, when a listener, to one who has been making very positive assertions, responds with saying "Oh that is your opinion" when the word indicates, not want of conviction on the part of the speaker, but rejection of his views on the part of the hearer. In this sense also and mainly the critic uses the word with regard to our Saviour's views of Scripture. Our Saviour gives as we have seen, a very emphatic testimony with regard to Scripture. The critic has been listening and he responds, "Oh, that is your opinion, but your opinion is no criterion to me. In spite of your opinion I feel myself at liberty to hold very different views of Scripture than those which you have expressed." Perhaps the critic would speak very differently were he, in fact, addressing our Saviour instead of writing in a book. But in effect he so addresses him, tells him that his views of Scripture are conditioned by the day in which he lived, that he is under the bondage of Rabbinical teaching and Jewish tradition and is ignorant of matters that have come to the knowledge of the critic, matters which make the Scriptures to the critic a vastly different thing to what they were to him whom he addresses. Thus the critic addresses our Saviour. Some will imagine we are misrepresenting him, or at least exaggerating his position. But that is not the case. It is the critic's exact position we have presented. It is a startling one.