

## Thoughts on Higher Criticism.

Dr. Driver's principal proofs for the late date of Deuteronomy are derived from the higher moral and spiritual tone that prevades this book as contrasted with "the Book of the Covenant" in Exodus. His estimate may be perfectly accurate, and yet the inference may be invalid. For 1,000 years he contemporary documents may be in the hands of Higher Critics illustrating the religion of England in the 19th century. One set may describe the worship and simple creed of the Salvation Army, another Eucharistic worship and a sacerdotal creed, and another the lofty morality of Maurice or Klugeloy. The critic of the future will have little difficulty in persuading himself that the first belongs to the rude nature-worship of the barbarous Celts or Saxons when first introduced to Christianity; that the second is a perversion of the Christianity of the country after it had attained its zenith, and that the third marks the intermediate Deuteronomic stage before religion hardened into a "Priestly Code." The fallacy of the argument in both cases arises from forgetfulness of the fact that elementary religion, pure morality, and an organized Church may co exist, and that different sections of the people may devote themselves to one or the other, and that one book like Deuteronomy may confine itself to moral teaching, while another, contemporary with it, may differ just because its object is different.

The strength of this objection is vastly increased by such recent discoveries as those of the clay tablets of Tel-el-Amarna which belong to the period of the Egyptian heretic King, Chu-naten, i.e., about B.C. 1450-1500. This shows that the cuneiform writing was in use not only throughout Western Asia, but in Egypt also. What is still more important in this connection is the fact that many of these tablets contain letters from Canaan, from Philistine cities, Askalon, Gaza, Lachish, from Amorite princes, from Phœniciaus, from Jerusalem itself. One or two contain Babylonian religious legends. The contention, therefore, of some critics that the absence of knowledge of writing tends to show the late date of the Biblical records must now be abandoned. The knowledge of Babylonian worship—which was mainly of the Host of Heaven—was intimate and permanent in Canaan, and this affords an incidental proof that no argument can be safely built on the late occurrence of allusions to the worship of the Host of Heaven outside Deuteronomy.

The change of attitude by Professor A. H. Sayce toward Old Testament criticism, as opposed to the position which he held some fifteen years ago, having been spoken of in *The Contemporary Review*, by Canon Cheyne, as a matter of "surprise," Professor Sayce, writing for the October number of that periodical, states and defends his present views. He admits that he has changed his attitude toward "criticism." Believing in a "sober and reverent examination of ancient documents and ancient history, based upon recognized scientific principles," he rejects "criticism which sets out with preconceived ideas and assumptions, which treats imperfect evidence as if it were perfect, or which builds conclusions upon theories which have yet to be proved." In admitting that he has of late years changed his attitude toward "higher criticism," Professor Sayce says that it is only of late years that he has begun to realize its true character, its tendencies, and its results. "We have all committed follies in our youth," he adds, "and one of the few compensations which old age is supposed to bring us is that of growing out of them." He asserts that fifteen years ago there was something to be said on behalf of the "new teaching" which can not be said for it any longer; that on the one hand the "higher criticism" of the Old Testament has not yet arrived at its present pitch of extravagance or shown so clearly the goal toward which it tends, and on the other hand Oriental archeology was still struggling for recognition, and the most important and crushing of the replies which it is now making to the dogmas of the "higher critics" were still waiting to be discovered. He says that the "critical" method is essentially vicious, and that archeological discovery is proving that it is so; that early Hebrew literature and history no longer stand alone, and it is every day becoming clearer that the verdict passed upon them by the "critic" is not justified in fact; that archeological research has at last enabled us to test the historical statements of the Pentateuch, and to compare the documents contained in it with those of other Oriental nations in the Mosaic age, and that the result is unfavorable to the "new teaching." After a review of the counter-proofs presented by archeology, he affirms that the "higher criticism" was triumphant only so long as the scientific instrument of comparison could not be employed against it. He believes that the Pentateuch is substantially the work of Moses. Against the counter-evidence of archeology, he asks, What has the "higher criticism" to bring forward? And answers: "Merely linguistic arguments. . . . I have been a student of language and languages all my life, and the study has made me very skeptical as to the historical and literary conclusions

that can be drawn from linguistic testimony alone." We now quote Professor Sayce's conclusion:

"But even if the archeological and linguistic evidence should be held to neutralize one another, there is one tremendous fact to which the 'higher critics' in this country resolutely close their eyes, but which ought to be more than sufficient to weigh down all the lists of words and idioms that were ever marshalled together. Against the evidence of the lists is the evidence of the doctrine and tradition of the Christian Church throughout the eighteen centuries of its existence. And those of us who believe that, in accordance with the promise of its divine Founder, the Spirit of God has been in the Church, guiding it into 'all truth,' find it impossible to believe at the same time that our teachers can be right. The same methods and arguments which have made of the Pentateuch a later and untrustworthy compilation, whose divine origin and character are discernible only to the critics themselves, would, if applied to the Gospels, end in the same results. In this country, it is true, our critical friends have hitherto kept their faces steadily averted from the New Testament, but the Protestant critics of the Continent have been less timid or prudent, and the way along which they should walk has long been pointed out to them by the Tübingen school. And even if we confine ourselves to the Pentateuch, the consequences of the 'critical' position are serious enough. It is not only that the conception of the Mosaic law which lies at the back of our own religion, which was assumed by our Lord and His Apostles, and which has been held over since by the Christian Church, is swallowed up in chaotic darkness; we are forced to assign the origin of the belief in the divine message and supernatural authority of the Law to successful fraud. I know we are told that what would be fraud in Modern Europe was not fraud in ancient Israel, and that with an improvement in manners and education has come an improvement in morals. But the question is not about ancient Israel and its ideas of morality, but about the immutable God, under whose inspiration, if we are to follow the teaching of Christ and Christianity, the Law was given to Israel. The 'higher critics' never seem to me to realize that their conclusions are opposed to the great practical fact of the existence of traditional Christianity, and that against this fact they have nothing to set except the linguistic speculations or a few individual scholars. It is not Athanasius against the world, but Nestorius against the Church. On the one side we have a body of doctrine, which has been the support in life and the refuge in death of millions of men of all nationalities and grades of mind, which has been witnessed to by saints and martyrs, which has conquered first the Roman Empire and then the barbarians who destroyed it, and which has brought a message of peace and good-will to suffering humanity. On the other side there is a handful of critics, with their lists of words and polychromatic Bibles. And yet the 'higher criticism' has never saved any souls or healed any bodies."

## Our Father.

Happily we have got past that old idea of God only as a sovereign, ruling like an Oriental despot, thinking only of His own glory in man's sense of personal glory. He is indeed a sovereign, but we do not yet make real the fullness of that more endearing relation that He is our Father as well. And if He says He is our Father, it is no irreverence for us to say that He is bound by His very word to be to us everything that we can imagine in our highest ideal of a father's care and a mother's love; and without doubt He is more than that. Nor do we yet take into our minds how emphatically the fatherhood implies the universal brotherhood of man. More than that, it raises man up to brotherhood with Christ, the Son of God. Jesus always called God His Father in His prayers; and He taught all men to say with Him, "Our Father." Suppose everybody acted on this truth that we are all brothers and sisters of a common Father, in the home, in business, in society, would anyone then say that what Christ taught in the sermon on the mount is impracticable, impossible to be carried out in actual life? No, we would say that heaven is here; and that all wranglings between man and man are hushed forever. Again, as God, by His very nature is our Father, so we are His children, and therefore bound to show in our thoughts and acts that we are His children. These are the commonest truths of experience, which a child learns from its mother's lips as soon as it becomes conscious of itself, and therefore the most precious and abiding with which we have to do. And for just this reason, that they are so common, they need a distinct and constant effort of the will to make them living forces in the conduct of life. But for a sure sense of rest, for peace amid the disquietudes that beset our way, for the grace of bearing trial and sorrow, for calmness to face expected troubles, for courage to go forward when the path seems all dark, for repose of mind in the storm and stress of life, there is blessed help and a stay of the soul for those who have learned from the heart to mean what they say when they pray, "Our Father."