

Higher Criticism—its Dangers and Benefits.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY REV. O. M. MILLIGAN BEFORE THE TORONTO MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATION

LITERATURE is an outcome of man's nature. Springing from such a source it must have great principles and laws characterizing it. In other words, there must be a science of literature.

This science involves a knowledge of the social, political, religious and intellectual condition of the people under which the literature of the people we are especially studying arise. We cannot understand a literature without an acquaintance with the genius of its people, their stage of moral and other forms of progress or retrogression, their geographical condition, their pursuits, their customs, their neighbours, in short, all that pertains to their inner character, environment, and history. Literature, we have said, being an outcome of man's nature has its laws. Religion, when true, gives us man in his most normal state. Its literature, therefore, will be the highest, and it possesses its laws as well as any other; for the Spirit of God is a Spirit of order.

In dealing with literature there are two things to settle—its text and its subject matter. The former is textual criticism; the latter is literary. By the first we strive to have put in the most correct shape the literature we are to examine. This is determined, we proceed to study its subject matter which is a higher element than the mere text of a literature. This is Higher Criticism. Higher Criticism is simply literary criticism. It deals with the aim, plan and working out of a piece of literature. It tries to gather into its conceptions the social, moral, intellectual, industrial, commercial, and religious elements pertaining to the literature of which it is endeavouring to form an adequate judgment.

The true critic guards against all presuppositions which might vitiate his work, whether these may come from the traditions of the past or the crude anticipations of the future. There is a conservative and radical bias of mind each to scrutinize least it hinder the work of literary or Higher Criticism.

Let it be remembered that the dogmatic contents of a literature is one thing; its literary characteristics and formation another.

Two men may be as wide assunder as the poles in religious belief and yet be of one mind regarding features and formation of the Scriptures as a literature. Understand what it contains for our edification.

In one sense Biblical literary criticism is no new study, and in another it is, at least in our own theological schools. Until lately exegetics, apologetics and systematic theology have occupied the field to the exclusion of Biblical theology. And yet exegetics has no proper fruition unless it culminates in Biblical theology; whilst on the other hand systematic theology supplies us only with the truths of Biblical theology in an abstract, lifeless, logical fashion. The missing link between exegetics and systematic theology is Biblical theology or Higher Criticism. This link is only beginning to be supplied in our theological colleges.

This branch of learning has its dangers like every other.

The dangers of all are certain presuppositions, philosophical or theological. Criticism should aim to arrive at judgments according to truth and not prejudice. Criticism must not be the slave of any opinion, but the guide to conduct to the correct apprehension of the ideas contained in any literature which we make the subject of study.

There are two important elements in Biblical literary criticism. These are the philological and historical. The historical has risen into great prominence in the latter half of this century. Previous to that time the philological occupied the place of prominence.

The great battle ground of Higher Criticism are the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua. All these are known as the Hexateuch.

The battle began here in 1753, when a French physician, Astruc, published a book at Brussels on the original memoirs which Moses used in composing the Book of Genesis.

He saw two documents in Genesis and as far as Exodus vi. 2. In 1779 Eichorn saw other peculiarities in the two documents of Astruc. The author also speaks of Elohim, says God "created;" he speaks of "beasts of the field," etc., where the Jahvist uses the word made or formed, "beast of the field." Eichorn made a list of the names peculiar to the Jahvist and to the author who uses the word Elohim and divided Genesis and the first two chapters of Exodus between the two documents. In 1805 De Wette drew attention to the peculiar style and character of Deuteronomy. In 1822 Bleek showed that the work of Joshua is the natural continuation of the history which began in Genesis.

Ewald in 1831 traced the existence of the Elohistic and Jahvist documents through the whole of the Hexateuch.

The discovery of the composite character of Genesis first gave rise to the idea that Genesis was made of several fragments united together. This idea—the fragmentary theory—did away with the unity of the Book. There may be unity of plan and diversity of origin in the documents comprising a book or books.

The writing using the word Elohim down to Exodus vi. 2 has been made the basis of the Hexateuch. It gives "a short dry history of the patriarchs, furnishing an elaborate chronology, noting the progress of revelation and giving with great fulness the Mosaic law delivered at Sinai."

The unity of the Hexateuch was put prominently forward by Stahelin in 1830 and afterwards by Ewald and Tuck.

Tuck called the document the Fundamental Writing; Ewald, the Book of Origins; Schrader, the Annalist's Writing; Wellhausen, the Book of the Four Covenants (covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses); Kuennen, the Priestly Code. It and it alone gives an elaborate system of ritual legislation.

After the unity of the Hexateuch was settled it was supposed Jahvist sections added to supplement the narrative of the priestly writer. This was Stahelin's view put forth in 1830. Mr. Milligan then traced the course of thought giving the views of Hafield and others and reverting to early times said that the Gnostics and Manicheans had rejected the Pentateuch as Mosaic, quoting Isaac Ben Jasus, of the 11th century and Rabbi Eben Ezra in the 12th century. The view of Spinoza, and of Dr. Geddes were dealt with and then a learned reference was made to the modern German schools, and the paper was concluded by a series of practical deductions from the data compiled.

The Church Abroad.

LEGAL summonses have been served on Rev. Messrs. Macdonald, of Sheldalga, and Macfarlane, of Raasay, and several elders at Killinann, Argyllshire, to compel them to yield up the respective churches and other buildings.

LORD MOUNTSTEPHEN has presented a silver service of communion plate to Cab-rach church.

A STAINED-GLASS window is to be erected in St. Michael's, Crieff, by the kirk session as a memorial of Principal Cunningham.

THE death occurred in Glasgow on 17th ult., of Rev. James Keith Duncan, M.A., retired minister of the South parish, Aberdeen.

THE invitation to Rev. G. H. C. Macgregor, of Aberdeen, to the pastorate of the Avenue church, Chicago (Mr. Moodie's), is not likely to be accepted.

AT a private conference in Glasgow of members of the Free and United Presbyterian churches under the auspices of the Laymen's league, it was agreed to hold a public meeting in the city soon, to be addressed by leading men connected with all the churches.

THE amount raised for the endowment of Shawlands church is £2,150. Before a quoad sacra parish can be formed £1,000 more must be got. Last year's income was £330. The stipend is £128, but Home Mission and Ferguson Bequest grants bring the minister's income up to £183.

REV. JOHN TULLOCH, M.A., senior minister of St. Stephen's church, Perth, died on the 17th ult., in London, where he had been residing for ten years. After a short ministry at Logierait he was settled in Perth in 1856, a time when the question of continuing a Gaelic service was troubling the congregation. By his efforts the matter was amicably settled. To his exertions also the new church was largely due. Deceased had reached his 81st year.

RECENTLY Dr. John G. Paton, the eminent missionary, gave an account of the trials and triumphs of Christian work in the New Hebrides, to a congregation which crowded the large Bute Hall of Glasgow University. Principal Caird conducted the preliminary services, and many professors were in the congregation. The venerable missionary spoke with extreme simplicity and intense power. His sketch of the people when he first knew them—their nakedness, cannibalism, infanticide, and other nameless crimes—followed by his description of what they have become through their conversion to Christianity, were listened to with keen and occasionally almost breathless interest. Such an address to such a congregation must produce incalculable and remaining good. Before concluding, Dr. Paton remarked upon the changes which have taken place in the university since his student days. Of all the professors of his time Lord Kelvin alone remains.

FOLLOWING the example of the England. Sabbath School Union, the Synod of the English Presbyterian Church has instituted written examinations for the children in its Sabbath schools. The examinations, which are conducted by a department, at the head of which is the Rev. R. Macphail, of Liverpool, took place on Saturday last. Judging by the questions which we have seen, a high degree of intelligence is expected from the scholars. This is in accordance with the best traditions of Presbyterianism.

THE Presbytery of Birmingham held a conference of its members recently on the question of personal religion. Mr. W. Ewing, B.D., named as ministers' dangers, professionalism, unnaturalness in tone and speech, commonplace, laziness, self-centred thought, dignity and respectability, dependency, etc.

YET another minister of the English Presbyterian Church has been invited to return to service north of the Tweed. It is not yet four years since the Rev. Archibald M. Marshall left a charge in the United Presbyterian Church to enter upon ministerial duties at Ellison street, Jarrow, and now he has been called to undertake the pastorate of the New United Presbyterian congregation at Callander, in the Presbytery of Stirling. The congregation at Ellison street has a large membership, but most English charges are trying, and it will not be surprising if Mr. Marshall elects to go North at the meeting of Newcastle Presbytery next month.

Wales. "QUITE a novel and exciting scene occurred at Siloh Chapel, Llanelly, the other day," says the *South Wales Daily Post*. "Siloh for years has been crushed by a load of debt. Three lady members undertook to wipe it off. And the work was done by the time that the C. M. monthly meeting was held there recently. At one of the meetings Mrs. Evans, Llangenech Park; Mrs. Evans, Vaughan street, and Mrs. Herbert, Avenue villa, were seen to sail into the 'set fair.' A pile of promissory 'notes' for £1,253 10s. 4d. were placed in a convenient place. The three ladies lighted each a lucifer match, and applied it to the documents, the smoke of which went up as the smoke of a burnt offering to the Lord."

DURING the past fourteen months the congregation at Oakland, Illinois, has taken on renewed strength. The membership has been doubled and quickened spiritually. The pastor of this church for the above specified time, who also continues his relationship, is Rev. W. O. Wallace, a former Canadian.