

have set to work to investigate and to criticise the Holy Scriptures in a manner which has certainly led to a great deal of searching of heart on the part of those who know and love their Bibles, and to a great deal of perplexity on the part of those who have little acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. It is sometimes said :—"Are we not to investigate the Bible as honestly and thoroughly as any other book?" I say, "By all means investigate the Bible." You cannot investigate it too closely. You have our Saviour's own command, or encouragement, at least, to "Search the Scriptures," for the word *Le* uses would justify any amount of honest investigation. Only, bear in mind, while you investigate, the nature of the subject with which you have to deal—that it is a subject absolutely unique in its character. It is not true to say that you may investigate and criticise the Holy Scriptures as you would any other book. It is not the same as any other book. There is a sense, no doubt, in which, as you hear it constantly alleged in these days, every man of genius, every great philosopher, every great scientist, is inspired by God, for we know that all the light that comes into the world can only come from Him who lighteneth every man. That is perfectly true, but no one who is ready to accept the statement of Holy Scripture respecting itself can fail to see that it stands in a perfectly different position from any treatise of science or philosophy, and from any other writings in the world. If it is true, as the Apostle tells us, that "Holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," this gives to the writings of Holy Scripture a character absolutely different from that of any other book that was ever known in the world. However freely it may be investigated, it must be ever investigated with the recollection of what the subject is which we have taken in hand. If only that were kept in view, I think we should have less to fear from what is going on around us nowadays. A great deal that shelters itself under the fair-sounding name of the higher criticism is really, in many cases, the enunciation of hasty conclusions derived by methods of investigation, which, perfectly legitimate in themselves, are not applicable to the Holy Scriptures. What is more sad, we find connected with such investigations a loss of that reverence for God's word which used to be the characteristic of all who professed to study or love it. We should pay dearly indeed for any increase of knowledge, even the truest knowledge, if it led to any diminution of the reverence with which we should study the word of the eternal God. Our poet has very truly said in one of the stanzas of *In Memoriam* :—

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell,
That mind and soul according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster. We are fools and slight,
We mock Thee when we do not fear,
But help Thy foolish ones to bear,
Help Thy vain world to bear the light."

Unless we can learn to bear the light, by maintaining reverence along with the light, we may well fear lest the criticism, which leads us to diminish our reverence, will not increase our true knowledge of the word of God. It is true that this lack of reverence—which I deeply lament, and against which I think it is one's duty to lift up one's voice in these days—has shown itself in its most offensive form, not in our country, but on the Continent. Still there are symptoms of a growing feeling of the same character, which are to be found in very recent publications, where the word of God is treated after a fashion which certainly would have horrified our forefathers, and where the manner in which even the writers of Holy Scripture are spoken of is a kind of patronizing contempt. That is not the spirit of which any student of Holy Scripture should address himself to his work. But notwithstanding this, we may well venture to hope that it is only one of those passing clouds which will from time to time cross the heaven of our spiritual life, and that when