

BENEFACTORS OR BLASPHEMERS?

A HIGHER CRITICISM INQUIRY.

BY SIR ROBERT ANDERSON, K.C.B., LL.D.

RELIGIOUS problems may be viewed from the standpoint either of the spiritual Christian or of the honest-hearted man of the world. Writing for the pages of 'Blackwood,' it is from this second point of view that I propose to deal with certain great questions which now occupy public attention.

This preface is not by way of an apology. For in view of the Reformation, no apology is needed for such a treatment of religious questions. The Reformation had a twofold character. It was an intensely Christian movement—the greatest of all spiritual revivals. But it was also an intellectual and political revolt. Had it not been for the revolt—the man-of-the-world side of the Reformation—the Church would have entered on a campaign of blood and fire, that would have made short work of the revival. And it is this man-of-the-world movement to which the title of "Protestant" properly belongs. It reminds us of the brave men of the Diet of Spires, who, with armed forces at their back, declared against coercion in the spiritual sphere.

The "Protestant religion" is but a whitewashed version of the apostasy of Christendom. True Protestantism is not a religion, but a bulwark behind

which Christianity can live in presence of that apostasy. It is to Christianity what the Navy is to commerce,—not a part of it, but a protection against dangers that would be fatal to it. Or if any one insists on a wider meaning for the term, then Protestantism dates from the Epistles of the New Testament, in which inspired apostles warned the body of believers against any departure from the faith on the part of ordained officers and accredited ministers of the Church. "What, then, is Apollos? and what is Paul?" the greatest of the apostles demanded. And he gives the answer, "Ministers through whom ye believed" (1 Cor. iii. 5, R.V.). Believed *what?* Believed the divinely inspired "Word of God." And having thus believed, the converts were in such a real sense "brought to God," that they were charged with the responsibility of sitting in judgment upon the future teaching even of the apostles themselves. In this spirit it was that he wrote to the Galatians, "Though *we*, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, . . . let him be accursed."

It was not, of course, that they were to fling off apostolic authority as to their life.

These exhortations related to their *beliefs*, and to their beliefs in the sphere of fundamental and vital truth "once for all delivered." And as the Epistles of John and the second Epistle of Peter make emphatically clear, the errors warned against related specially and primarily to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, His deity and His authority as a teacher.

This digression thus ends by leading me back to my special subject. For it is error of this character that is charged against the movement known as the "Higher Criticism." And this question I propose to discuss from what I have called the man-of-the-world point of view. Nothing, indeed, is further from my purpose than to take sides with so-called "orthodoxy" against the fullest and freest criticism of the Bible, if only it be fair and intelligent and reverent. The standard of orthodoxy, moreover, is "the teaching of the Church." And as the Thirty-nine Articles insist, Churches have erred and may err, and they have no authority to coerce faith. More than this: the apostolic injunctions already cited make it a duty to resist "the Church" if its teaching clashes with Scripture. Therefore, as every Protestant is a heretic *in esse*, so every true Christian is a heretic *in posse*.

I cannot refrain from adding that the present revolt against faith has been stimulated and embittered by the narrowness and blindness of Evangelical orthodoxy. I say this reluctantly, but I say it with em-

VOL. CLXXVI.—NO. MLXVIII.

phasis and feeling; for I myself was at one time drawn toward scepticism by this very influence. And my escape was mainly due to my turning away from creeds and theologies to an earnest, sustained, and independent study of Holy Scripture.

But here and now, my aim is merely to subject the new critics to criticism of the kind to which they subject "the Biblical writers." I write, not as a Christian for Christians, but as a man of the world for men of the world. Not that I assume my readers are not Christians, but it is not as Christians I am addressing them. If I appeal to the Bible, it will be as to a classic with which all educated people are familiar. Beyond this I ask my readers to use, not their Bibles, but their brains.

A "test case" will serve to explain and illustrate my position. 'The Nineteenth Century and After' boasts of being the exponent of the highest culture of our day. The July number contains a brief article on "The Virgin Birth." If, the writer declares, the Fourth Gospel be the work of the apostle John, "the truth of the story of a miraculous birth must be altogether discarded." For, he adds, "the writer of it had no knowledge of His miraculous and divine birth." I meet this statement by merely setting out the opening sentences of the Fourth Gospel. Here are the well-known words:—

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

2 M

Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

May we not say that if these words relate to the son of a Jewish mechanic, the writer of this, the greatest religious book in the world, was the most highly developed specimen of the religious fool that the world has ever known!

The following is the concluding paragraph of the article in question:—

"That the first followers of Christ knew nothing of the story of the Virgin-birth seems plain from the fact that there is not the smallest allusion to it in any of the Epistles. . . . If then the writers of the earliest treatises dealing with the principles of the Christian faith never heard of the Virgin-birth, and felt no necessity for it, why should belief in such a doctrine, resting as it does on scanty and unsatisfactory evidence, any longer be insisted on?"

If this were a judicial inquiry, we should here, as the lawyers phrase it, "put in" the Epistles *en bloc*. But suffice it to quote the following characteristic sentence:—

"For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Col. i. 16, 17).

And yet we are told that there is not the smallest allusion to the miraculous birth in the Epistles! Are we to believe, then, that these words refer to the Jewish mechanic's son! It is as clear as light that in

apostolic days the Virgin-birth was so universally accepted that there was no need to assert its truth. The plain fact is that this article is an exhibition of ignorance and folly which is discreditable both to the writer and to the 'Nineteenth Century Review.' Men who on such grounds as these attack the virgin-birth belong to the class of whom the apostle wrote, "Professing themselves to be wise they became"—something quite different!

Intelligent rationalism does not ignore the testimony of the documents. It admits that the apostles, and the early Christians generally, believed in the Incarnation and the Atonement and the Resurrection and the Deity of Christ. But, as Dr Harnack of Berlin, that champion exponent of rationalism, would tell us, we in this enlightened age must be content with a more prosaic faith.

For example: though the Deity of Christ—the foundation truth of Christianity—rests, not on the Resurrection, but on the Incarnation, it was by the Resurrection, as the apostle Paul teaches, that He "was declared to be the Son of God." And yet, according to Harnack, the Resurrection was only an "idea"—a grand and elevating idea. Let this theory be tested by the narrative of the Acts of the Apostles.

At the time of the Crucifixion the disciples in Jerusalem numbered "about 120" (Acts i. 15). This was the grand result of the Lord's three years' personal ministry, and the ministry of

all the apostles. The apostles, having then gone into hiding, reappeared on the day of Pentecost, and preached to the Jews at the festival. And the result of their testimony was that "3000 souls" joined their company in a single day (Acts ii. 41). Was there ever a religious movement such a fiasco as that of the Nazarene! Did ever a religious movement achieve such a triumph as that led by the apostles after the death of the Nazarene? What had happened to account for such an amazing transformation? The question admits of but one answer, *The Resurrection*.

The rationalist theory is that belief in the Resurrection was the growth of time, when a haze of sentiment and mysticism had gathered around the traditions of Calvary. But this theory is exploded by the fact that the interval was measured, not by years, but by *weeks*. Nor were the events of Pentecost the mere flash of a transient success. The fourth chapter records that the 3000 converts of the day of Pentecost were soon more than trebled. For we are told that "the number of *the men* came to be about 5000" (verse 4); and we may assume that the women converts were at least as numerous. In the fifth chapter we read that they were further joined by "*multitudes* both of men and women" (verse 14). And again in the sixth, that "the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a *great company of the priests* were obedient to the faith" (verse 7).

Again I ask, How can all

this be explained? Its significance is increased by the fact that these converts, one and all, were Jews, and that at this time the opposition of the Sanhedrim and the priests was fiercer and more systematised even than before the Crucifixion. They were Jews, and they continued to be Jews. For the suggestion that "they changed their religion" is a sheer *bêtise*. The apostles always repudiated such a charge. Twenty years after the Crucifixion they were still regarded as a Jewish sect—"the sect of the Nazarenes" (Acts xxiv. 5). Had it been otherwise the accusation on which Paul was arraigned before Felix would not have been listened to in a Roman court. And what was the apostle's defence? "This I confess unto thee, that according to the Way (which they call a sect), so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets." No words could assert more plainly that the position he claimed was that of the true and orthodox Jew.

Now, there is no ordinance to which the Jews adhered more strictly than the seventh-day Sabbath. How was it, then, that with one consent they began to observe the *first* day of the week? Something must have happened to account for this. What was it, then? Only one answer is possible, *The Resurrection*.

It would be entirely in keeping with "the spirit of the age" to dispose of all this by

assuming that the apostles and their converts were a set of weak and credulous fools. For wisdom was born in these wonderful days of ours! But I am not addressing philosophers, but fair and sensible men of the world; and to such I appeal to consider these facts. I am not attempting here to prove the truth of the Resurrection. My purpose, I repeat, is destructive criticism. I am merely showing that in arguing against these great transcendental truths, some writers ignore the documents, and others the facts.

And Dr Harnack is the greatest living exponent of the "Higher Criticism" as originally formulated. The movement was not the outcome of any new discoveries about the Bible. It sprang from a desire to make terms with the rationalism which was swamping the religious life of Germany at the close of the eighteenth century. And to attain this result every miraculous element in Scripture was given up. Such a compromise could have but one ending. Instead of the rationalists becoming believers, the believers came down to the level of the rationalists. The critics began by deciding against the Bible, and then set themselves to find reasons for their decisions. This, indeed, has been the task of the critics ever since—not to ascertain whether the sacred books are genuine, but to find reasons for deciding against their genuineness. And while each generation of the

critics has rejected the reasons adopted by that which preceded it, the original decisions remain as "the assured results of the best scholarship and modern criticism."

Religious teachers are not infrequently deficient in logic and common-sense, and many who accept these "assured results" cling with blind fervour to truths which they undermine. But Dr Harnack is a really great thinker, and he recognises that if the Bible be a purely human book, the Christ of which it speaks must be a purely human person. "A man of the name of Jesus Christ" is the Buddha of the religious system which passes with him for Christianity.¹ The Bible is the greatest and best of books, and this "Jesus" is the greatest and best of men. But *humanum est errare*, and "Jesus" erred; erred grievously, for instance, in his estimate of the Hebrew Scriptures.

There are evil books of a certain class which circulate freely abroad, but which must be toned down and "expurgated" before being introduced into England. And so is it with heresies. People are keen to declare themselves on the side of the critics, for that gives proof of "culture"; but English Christians are not prepared to barter their Lord and Saviour for the "Jesus" of German rationalists. But if we believe in the Deity of Christ, how can we refuse to accept His teaching as being an end of controversy on the main questions

¹ See the opening sentence of his 'What is Christianity?'

raised by the "Higher Criticism"? A gulf thus separates the critics from the Christians. How can it be bridged? The task might well seem impossible. But it has been achieved by pressing an old heresy into the service.

We are all familiar with those words of the apostle Paul, He "made Himself of no reputation," or, as the Revised Version reads, He "emptied Himself" (Phil. ii. 7). And upon this expression has been built up the theology of the *Kenosis*, which claims to enable us to worship Christ as being really God, and yet at the same time to dismiss His teaching as being unauthoritative and untrue. For in His humiliation, we are told, He came down so entirely to the human level that He knew no more of divine things than His contemporaries.

"This conclusion, if true, is portentous," the Bishop of Durham urges in his preface to my work, 'The Bible and Modern Criticism.' For, he adds—

"It is a confession that on a matter central in His message the Master was much mistaken. He appears thus as not merely capable of neascience: that is a very different matter; the most cautious, the most worshipping, theology may hold that He consented, in His Humanity, to limitations of His conscious knowledge and to silence outside those bounds. But here He appears as ignorant with that sort of ignorance which profoundly impairs the whole value of a teacher—the ignorance of the man who does not know where his knowledge ends, and so makes confident affirmations, and draws confident inferences, where his basis as to facts is unsound.

"Such a fallible Christ lies open to the suspicion of fallibility on other matters than the nature and integrity of the Old Testament; and reasonably. The theology which denies the Lord abnormal knowledge of facts of the past is only consistent when it extends its denial to the future, and takes *cum grano* the New Testament doctrine of His Return, which is a matter either of revelation, or of the vaguest and most impalpable forecast."

Dr Moule is writing as a Christian for Christians, and one might suppose that every Christian would shrink from the conclusion he deplors. But here, as a man of the world I appeal to all thoughtful men to consider this question on its merits. The fact is not disputed that the teaching of Christ about the Hebrew Scriptures was clear and uncompromising. The critics admit this without reserve. But here is the way they get rid of it—I quote from Hastings' 'Dictionary of the Bible,' which is the most approved and accredited exposition of their views: "Both Christ and the apostles or writers of the New Testament held the current Jewish notions respecting the divine authority and revelation of the Old Testament."

Now, first I would notice that with strange blindness the Kenosists (if I may so designate them) ignore a fact which demolishes their entire theory. The Lord's most definite and emphatic statements on this subject were made *after* His resurrection, when there could be no question that He spoke with divine knowledge. For it was after the Resurrection that, "beginning at Moses, and all

the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Here is one of His utterances of that epoch: "These are the words which I spake unto you when I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me." And the record adds, "Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures."

He thus adopted and confirmed all His previous teaching about the Hebrew Scriptures — teaching which, the critics tell us, was erroneous, and represented merely "current Jewish notions." I am not writing for controversialists, but for intelligent and fair men; and I ask them to form their own judgment on this issue: Must we not accept "Moses and the prophets," or give up belief in the deity of Christ?

The "critical hypothesis" is thus falsified by the very Scriptures to which it appeals. And the only escape from the conclusion is to challenge the authority of these records of His teaching. And with what result? We may still cling to a "Christian religion" based on traditions about "a man called Jesus Christ"; but *Christianity* collapses like a house built upon the sand.

But this is not all. In addressing the Jews the Lord admittedly based His Messianic claims upon these Hebrew Scriptures. To use the language of the street, He got

into the same boat with Moses, to sink or swim with him. But in teaching His disciples He assumed quite other ground. "He spoke as one having [inherent] authority, and not as the Scribe." The Scribes could only appeal to the Scriptures, but *He* claimed immediate divine sanction for His words. They were not His own, He declared, but God-given. I might fill pages with quotations to exemplify and prove this; but as it is not disputed, I content myself with a single text, and it is specially chosen because it proves the Kenosists to be wrong even on their own ground. These are His words: "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him."

Now one of two conclusions is inevitable here. Either the position of the pseudo-critics is untenable; or else — well, though writing as a man of the world, I cannot bring myself to state the only possible alternative. Let me put it into the mouth of some contemporary "Tom Paine." "The founder of your faith" (might he not say?) "was, you admit, unreliable as a teacher; but more than this, by your own showing he was a religious enthusiast of the most dangerous and mischievous type—one of those neurotic beings who with impressive earnestness and solemnity palm off their lucubrations and delusions as divine revelations."

"If these conclusions are demanded by irrefutable fact, let them be accepted," the

Bishop of Durham adds to his words already quoted. But when we come to examine the evidence we find, instead of a rock-work of "irrefutable fact," a mere network of hypotheses and assumptions. In these very pages I have been permitted to expose and refute the pseudo-critics' case against the Book of Daniel.¹ Here I desire to say a few words about their attack upon the books of Moses. Few they must be, on account of the exigencies of space.

The crusade against the Pentateuch has a sinister history. It originated in the early centuries, when Paganism sought to check the spread of Christianity. It was revived by Astruc, a typical eighteenth-century Frenchman, half infidel, half Jesuit. And toward the close of that century it was formulated by German rationalists. Its chief purpose was at any cost to get rid of miracles. It rested in the main on a twofold basis: first, the discovery that Genesis incorporates earlier documents; and secondly, the absurdity of supposing that such books could have been written in such a barbarous age. As for miracles, the infidel is logical in his unbelief, but the *quasi*-Christian is as sapient as one who refuses to believe that a watchmaker could regulate or alter his own handiwork. And as for the documents in Genesis, no one who accepts the *a priori* argument in favour of a written revelation can

suppose that there was no such revelation before the days of Moses. The hypothesis that the early chapters of the Bible are based on preceding revelations would be extremely probable, even if no evidence were forthcoming to support it.

It was the "absurdity" element, however, that weighed most with those who first fathered the sceptical crusade in England. For everybody knew that history began with the Greeks; and it was unreasonable to suppose that such a marvellous literature could have existed a thousand years before Herodotus. But the "absurdity" of a past generation is a commonplace of the schoolroom to-day. And the critics now maintain that the most characteristic element in the Mosaic literature was borrowed from a literature which flourished centuries before, in the time of Abraham.

But the critics cannot have it both ways. If the Mosaic books borrowed from Hammurabi, the fact creates a presumption that they belong to the Mosaic age. And yet the critics assign them to the age of the Exile, a thousand years after Hammurabi was forgotten!

Be this as it may, the fact remains that the chief ground on which the Mosaic books were formerly discredited is now abandoned by the critics themselves as an ignorant blunder. As Professor Sayce tells us, "In the century before the Exodus, Palestine was a

¹ See "Daniel in the Critic's Den," 'Blackwood's Magazine' for April 1895.

land of books and schools." On what ground, then, is the Pentateuch now assailed?

The critics insist that the Bible must be treated like any other book, and to this plausible sophistry their success is largely due. Were it not that the great majority of persons who are charged in our criminal courts are of a low type, and experience proves that they are charged justly, the practice of putting accused persons in the dock would be deemed an outrage upon justice. It seldom fails, indeed, to create a prejudice. Happily, however, an Irish story which illustrates this is—only an Irish story! It is worth telling, however, for its own sake. The evidence against the prisoner broke down so obviously that the judge, without a word of comment, told the rustic jury to give their verdict. Without a moment's hesitation they convicted him; and in answer to the judge's indignant remonstrance, the foreman exclaimed, "But sure, my lord, whatever would he be in the dock for if he wasn't guilty!"

A Scotch story will exemplify the application of the principle in another sphere. A great lady, of high rank and ancient lineage, offended by Abernethy's proverbial brusqueness, asked with immense dignity if he knew who she was. "Ma'am," he blurted out, "you're just an old woman with a disordered stomach."

In view of the history of the sacred books, every true critic will recognise a presumption in their favour. For such a pre-

sumption differs from a prejudice. But the pseudo-critics insist on treating them much as the Irish jury treated the prisoner, and the Edinburgh doctor the patient. Be it so. Let us yield the point; and accepting the position they contend for, let us hear what they have to say. It is never satisfactory, and seldom fair, to state an opponent's case otherwise than in his own words. And one of the tricks of controversy is to use the words of some unaccredited adherent of the opposite camp. But such practices are not to my liking. My appeal shall be to a writer who is regarded as the best accredited representative of the best school of criticism. I mean Professor Driver of Oxford. The following is from his standard work, 'The Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament.' And it is quoted from his summary of the critics' argument against the Mosaic books:—

"We can only argue upon grounds of probability derived from our view of the progress of the art of writing, or of literary composition, or of the rise and growth of the prophetic tone and feeling in ancient Israel, or of the period at which the traditions contained in the narratives might have taken shape, or of the probability that they would have been written down before the impetus given to culture by the monarchy had taken effect, and similar considerations, for estimating most of which, though plausible arguments on one side or the other may be advanced, a standard on which we can confidently rely scarcely admits of being fixed."—Sixth ed., p. 123.

On the one side, then, we are offered "grounds of probability," and "plausible argu-

ments"; and on the other side we have the *imprimatur* of our divine Lord!

But the reader may demand, Do not the critics offer evidence of another kind? Yes; for example, while they no longer aver that the Hebrews were in the pot-hooks stage of writing, they now insist that spiritually they were incapable of receiving such an advanced revelation as the Pentateuch. And they appeal to certain passages in the Pentateuch itself in support of this. A grotesquely fallacious argument this: for they insist that the books were written in the age of the Exile, and their argument assumes that they were written in the age of the Exodus.

But what about the philological evidence of the "Higher Criticism"? Scholars of the highest competence have demonstrated that the testimony of true Higher Criticism is explicitly in favour of the Mosaic books. And as for allegations of error, these have been again and again disproved. The "arguments" of the critics have been refuted, and their "facts" have been shown to be but "fancies." But *cui bono*? The charge they bring against Christian apologists of a certain type is absolutely true of themselves: they cling to their shibboleths, and, like the Jesuits, they refuse to answer, or even to discuss, what is urged by their opponents. In his book, 'Are the Critics Right?' Wilhelm

Möller states that he was at one time "immovably convinced of the irrefutable correctness of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis," and that what first aroused his suspicions was the advice his teachers pressed on him to read nothing upon the other side. In "the assured results of the best scholarship and modern criticism" they have attained *Nirvana*, and neither arguments nor facts can move them.¹

And to appeals of another kind they are equally deaf. The Bishop of Durham has wholly exceptional claims to a respectful hearing upon any subject of this character; and his preface to my book above mentioned is essentially an appeal. But while the press organs of the critics could not ignore it, they one and all dismissed it with a sneer. As for the secular papers, most of them play into the hands of the critics as effectually as clerical papers abroad play into the hands of the priests. If Moses himself reappeared and wrote a book to confute the "Higher Critics," the newspapers would refer it to some "Higher Critic" for review, and the public would be advised, in the jargon of the school, that it was unworthy of notice as being opposed to "the assured results of modern criticism"!

But to resume, we must here distinguish between two questions that are apt to be con-

¹ Even Prof. Sayce's book, 'Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies,' remains unanswered. Books like my own 'Pseudo-Criticism, or the Higher Criticism and its Counterfeit,' of course are ignored.

founded. The one is, whether the Pentateuch is inspired Scripture; and the other, whether the critical attack upon it has succeeded. An attempt to establish the Christian position within the limits of a magazine article would be ridiculous; but even within these limits the contention of the critics can be refuted. And while the refutation will not avail to set up the authority of the Pentateuch, it cannot fail to discredit the authority of the critics.

“Don't waste time on collateral issues, if your opponent's case can be shattered on some vital point,” was the advice once given by a famous advocate. And acting on this maxim, I will here make the critics a present of every incidental issue raised in their crusade against the Mosaic books. These issues have been fully dealt with by competent scholars on both sides of the Atlantic; and here I am content to appeal to a single fact which proves the critical hypothesis to be untenable and false. I refer to the admitted and well-known fact that the Pentateuch constituted in an exclusive sense the Bible of the Samaritans.

Lest I should be suspected of misrepresenting the critics, I will again allow one of themselves to speak for them—a writer of the highest authority—the late Professor Robertson Smith. In his “Samaritans” article in the ‘Encyclopædia Britannica’ we read:—

“They [the Samaritans] regard themselves as Israelites, descendants

of the ten tribes, and claim to possess the orthodox religion of Moses. . . . The priestly law, which is throughout based on the practice of the priests in Jerusalem before the Captivity, was reduced to form after the Exile, and was published by Ezra as the law of the rebuilt temple of Zion. The Samaritans must therefore have derived their Pentateuch from the Jews after Ezra's reforms.”

And in the same paragraph he says that, according to the contention of the Samaritans, “not only the temple of Zion but the earlier temple of Shiloh and the priesthood of Eli were schismatical.” And yet, as he goes on to say, “the Samaritan religion was built on the Pentateuch alone.”

Now mark what this implies. We know something of racial bitterness. We know more, unfortunately, of the fierce bitterness of religious strife. And both these elements combined to alienate the Samaritans from the Jews. But more than this, in the post-exilic period distrust and dislike were turned to intense hatred—“abhorrence” is Robertson Smith's word—by the sternness and contempt with which the Jews spurned their proffered help in the work of reconstruction at Jerusalem, and refused to acknowledge them in any way. And yet we are asked to believe that, at this very time and in these very circumstances, the Samaritans, while hating the Jews much as Orangemen hate Jesuits, and denouncing the whole Jewish cult as schismatical, not only accepted these Jewish books relating to that cult as the “service books” of their own ritual, but adopted them as

their "Bible," to the exclusion even of those sacred and venerated Scriptures known as "the Former Prophets."

In the whole range of controversy, religious or secular, was there ever propounded a theory more utterly incredible and preposterous! The authority of "the Church" leads even scholars of eminence to accept dogmas which ordinary men reject as outraging both reason and fact; and this fetish of "modern criticism" has an equally sinister influence on scholars of another school. The Samaritan Bible is conclusive proof that the "critical hypothesis" of the origin of the Pentateuch is absolutely untenable.

Truth will triumph in the end. Ferdinand Christian Baur and the other brilliant scholars who claimed to have established that the New Testament was a collection of "pseud-autographs" and forgeries, have no superiors among contemporary critics. But these "assured results of criticism" are now discarded even by the rationalists. This does not prove the genuineness of the sacred writings, but it proves that "assured results of criticism," commended by scholars of the highest eminence, may be after all but a farrago of blunders.

And even Baur's conclusions were not more fatal to Christianity than are the "assured results" recorded in Hastings' 'Dictionary of the Bible' and similar works now held in high repute. For Baur claimed merely to have established that the records of the Lord's teaching were not authentic, while

the pseudo-critics of to-day appeal to these records, accepted as authoritative, to prove that the Lord's teaching was marked by ignorance and error. "Do you mean that on these subjects Professor G. A. Smith knows better than Christ did?" was the question asked at a recent conclave of these pundits. "Yes," was the answer given; "for Professor Smith has access to sources of information which were not accessible to Christ." As an American humourist phrases it,

"They didn't know everything down in Judee."

Who, then, will not indorse the following words with which the Bishop of Durham ends his preface, already cited? "The matter is one where, while the fairness of controversy must be guarded, its mere courtesies may not always be in place. For the question is of tremendous urgency. 'We are contending for our all.'"

Such is the issue raised by the so-called "Higher Criticism." The theory seems plausible that in His humiliation the Lord came down, *for all purposes*, to the level of humanity. But even if true, this would leave unexplained the amazing fact that the Divine Spirit, whose fullest guidance He promised to His disciples, left *Him* without guidance in a matter that was vital to His mission. But what concerns us here is not the fact, if fact it be, that in His teaching about the Hebrew Scriptures He was so grievously mistaken, but the undis-

puted fact that, with extreme solemnity, He claimed acceptance of His words as being "the words of God." By the Jewish law this was accounted blasphemy. Hence the charge which led the Sanhedrim to decree His death. And if the critics are right, *was not that charge legitimate?*

Dr Moule might well describe the critical conclusions as "momentous." But he was thinking mainly of their effect upon the Christian's faith. They give rise to considerations of another kind which closely concern the thoughtful man of the world. This new "enlightenment" is beginning to reach the masses of the population, and ere long they cannot fail to grasp its full significance. The refinements of the *Kenosis* theology may influence thought in our colleges and drawing-rooms, but they will not do for the street. The national character has been built up on the belief of the Bible as a divine revelation, and to this is due the fact that Britons are the most law-abiding people in the world. What, then, will be the effects of this Higher Criticism upon the unthinking multitudes? "Society will pass, to say the least, through a dangerous in-

terval." The words are those of a well-known writer, a champion of "science and criticism."¹ And he adds—

"The removal of false beliefs cannot prove in the end but a blessing to mankind. But at the same time the foundations of general morality have inevitably been shaken, and a crisis has been brought on, the gravity of which nobody can fail to see, and nobody but a fanatic of materialism can see without the most serious misgiving."

I press the question, then, Are the critics right? It is indeed a question "of tremendous urgency." No man can afford to ignore it, and no Christian can refuse to take sides upon it. If they are right, they have earned our gratitude by relieving us from the incubus of error by which the teaching of Christ has deluded His people for nineteen centuries. If they are wrong, the reproach they cast on *Him* must rebound with crushing force upon themselves; and no "mere courtesies" of controversy, no mistaken views of Christian charity, can be allowed to check the expression of our reprobation.

If the "Higher Critics" are right, let them be hailed as benefactors; if they are wrong, let them be branded as blasphemers.

¹ Professor Goldwin Smith.