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## THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY AND ITS WORK.

In the last number of this REVIEW\* some account was given of the calling of the Westminster Assembly and of its historical meaning. It was pointed out that its really significant work was the preparation of formularies designed to serve the churches of the three kingdoms as a basis for uniform establishments. Some account of its work on these so-called "four parts of uniformity" is now to be given.

Of these "four parts of uniformity", the one which was at once the most pressing and the most difficult for the Assembly, was the preparation of a platform of government for the churches. Both Parliament and Assembly were, indeed, fairly committed to the Presbyterian system under solemn sanction; and the majority of the members of both bodies were sincerely Presbyterian in conviction.<sup>66</sup> But sincerity and consistency are very different matters; and so soon as the details of church organization were brought under discussion, a bewildering variety of judgments was revealed. The Scots, though prepared to yield in the interest of harmony all that it was possible to yield,

\* Number for April, 1908, pp. 177-210.

<sup>66</sup> Baillie, writing in 1645, says (ii., p. 320): "The bodie of the Parliament, City, and Countrey are for the Presbyterie." Cf. i., p. 287, from Dec., 1640: "The farr greatest part are for our discipline."

THE DETERMINATION OF RELIGIOUS VALUE  
THE ULTIMATE PROBLEM OF THE  
HIGHER CRITICISM.

The Higher Criticism may be somewhat loosely defined to be, the science of the processes by which from internal characteristics and other circumstantial evidence we seek to determine<sup>1</sup> the Origin, Form, and Value<sup>2</sup> of the biblical writings. And yet, while doubtless sufficiently accurate for general purposes, such a definition may mislead. Indeed, it will mislead, if it leaves the impression that the problems of Origin, Form, and Value are independent and coördinate problems. Such is by no means the case. And the frequent failure to recognize the fact that such is not the case has been the source of much harmful confusion. For to this score, in part at least, must be set down the abortive attempts that have been made to substitute for the term Higher Criticism such terms as Literary Criticism, Historical Criticism, and Historico-literary Criticism.<sup>3</sup> All such substitutions put a part—and the least important part—for the whole. They absorb attention upon the means to the ignoring for the most part of the end. No doubt even Literary Criticism has for its ultimate goal the determination of value—literary value, of course. But should it stop short of its ultimate goal,—that is, should it merely deal with literary form,—it would still be within its own proper territory. And so Historical Criticism, even though the determination of historical value be its ultimate goal, may

<sup>1</sup> It is well that we should by such language pointedly remind ourselves that circumstantial evidence will not always base a rational judgment upon the points in question.

<sup>2</sup> For these, to his thinking, exceptionally felicitous terms, as for much else, the writer is indebted to Dr. A. C. Zenos' *The Elements of the Higher Criticism*.

<sup>3</sup> See Zenos' *Elements of the Higher Criticism*, pp. 7f.

stop short of this goal, and still be within its own proper domain. But the case is wholly different with the Higher Criticism. It cannot stop with the consideration of either Origin or Form without being pronounced a gratuitous and useless intruder into the field of either Literary or Historical Criticism, and as such justly liable to action for ejection. Thus what in the case of Literary and Historical Criticism respectively are legitimate even though not necessarily ultimate ends, in the case of the Higher Criticism are not ends at all, but simply means to an end.

As another result of the failure to recognize the interrelations between the problems of Origin, Form, and Value, and the regnant position of the latter in the Higher Criticism, the distinction between the Higher Criticism and Special Introduction is in practice almost totally obliterated. And yet the two disciplines are perfectly distinct the one from the other. True, both deal with the problems of Origin and Form. But where each keeps to its own proper task they deal with these problems in very different ways, and—what is of even more importance—for totally different purposes. Special Introduction, in fact, is not called upon to deal with either Origin or Form as original problems. It is entirely at liberty to assume the solution of these problems from some other source. And certainly in any investigation it may make of them it is in no wise bound to base its findings upon internal characteristics or other circumstantial evidence. The sole interest of Special Introduction in either problem arises from its *bearing upon the interpretation* of whatever writing the former may have in hand at any given time. And it is the failure to recognize this fact in a practical way that makes most books on Special Introduction so comparatively barren for the only purpose for which they exist—that is, for the purpose of throwing light upon the *interpretation* of the books with which they deal. But in the case of the Higher Criticism all this is totally different. For it the problems of Origin and Form are no doubt real problems, albeit it is limited to some form of

circumstantial evidence in its efforts to solve them. But—and this is the point that claims special attention—while real, Origin and Form are not ultimate problems for the Higher Criticism. It is interested in them simply because of their bearing, direct or indirect, upon the problem of Value. And whatever aspect of either of these problems may at any time be immediately under investigation, the ultimate end for which the investigation is being prosecuted is the determination of Value. In a word, the determination of Value upon the basis of Origin and Form is the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism.

Unless the writer is greatly mistaken, this is a point that needs to be stressed as it has never yet been. What he has ventured to call the regnant position of the problem of value in the Higher Criticism has never received formal recognition. Even such thoroughly competent writers as Drs. Briggs and Zenos not only make no attempt to correlate the problems of Origin and Form with that of Value, but give no intimation that they are themselves aware that such correlation exists, and certainly none of being aware that in the Higher Criticism the former problems exist for the latter. And yet, as I have already shown, it is only as this fact is perceived that we can hope to vindicate for the Higher Criticism the position of an independent discipline, distinct on the one hand from Literary and Historical Criticism, and on the other from Special Introduction. Further still, it is only by assigning to the problem of Value its true importance that we get a just insight into the importance of the problems of Origin and Form, and indeed, that we can hope to redeem the discipline as a whole from the charge of being at best but a species of dilettanteism. Finally, upon the position assigned to the problem of Value will depend the coherence and unity of the science of the Higher Criticism, and upon our recognition of its position will largely depend our precision in the use of the processes of the Higher Criticism, and the worth of the conclusions reached in the use of them.

Under these circumstances the writer trusts that it will not be a work of supererogation for him to adduce the evidence for the position just laid down, namely, that the determination of Value is the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism. Just because the regnant position of the problem of Value has never been distinctly recognized, the evidence to be adduced must needs be incidental and indirect. It must from the nature of the case be gathered from what may be called the trend of thought and procedure on the part of those using the Higher Criticism, and from statements let drop by them, the bearing of which was not clearly perceived by those who made them. If examination shows that, beginning with Eichhorn himself, the labors of all, of whatever school, who have employed this discipline, have tended to converge upon the determination of Value, then we may be reasonably sure that the determination of Value, even though the unconscious, is still the legitimate and inevitable goal of the discipline itself.

It is notorious, then, that for at least half a century a great controversy has waged around the origin and form of the books of the Old Testament. That the high contestants on both sides of this controversy have written as those contending *pro aris et focis* is equally well known. Whatever phase of either problem has happened for the time to be at the front, those handling it have always assumed that it had a significance beyond itself. It has been discussed not as a question of archæology, nor even as a nicety of history, but as having important practical significance for both scholar and layman. The advocates of the new views have felt it to be a matter of conscience promptly to popularize the results of their investigations. They claim to have given the world a new Bible. And assuredly this claim is true. Now this new Bible is either a better Bible or a worse, a Bible of more value or of less than the old.

The following will serve as a specimen of the claims

made:<sup>4</sup> "If the Anglican Church is ever to renovate her theology and to become in any real sense undeniably the Church of the future, she cannot afford to be careless or intolerant of attempts to modernize our methods of criticism and exegesis."

Clearly, the ultimate justification of such language can only be found in the fact that the problems of criticism all converge upon the determination of Value. Grant this and there is a certain propriety at least in Canon Cheyne's statement. Deny it and it becomes the merest buncombe. The same conclusion is forced upon us by such a statement as the following:

"Upon the other hand, not a few, like Budde himself, who had been trained in the Ewald-Hupfeld theory, can testify that it was only after repeated and most laborious study of the positions advanced by Wellhausen that they were constrained, on grounds of conscience, to go over to his camp. Nay more, they can testify that this conception of the history of Israel has deepened their faith, that they have learned in this way better to understand the personality of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the New Testament."<sup>5</sup>

The inference is unavoidable. If the findings of Wellhausen criticism are significant for faith, and for our understanding of the personality of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the New Testament, then they are determinative of Value, for the books of the Old Testament.

But that the determination of Value is the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism is susceptible of yet more specific proof. From the days of Eichhorn to the present, those most conspicuous for the use of this discipline have never tired of emphasizing its bearing upon our estimate of the value of the books of Scripture. They have not always been consistent in their statements. They have too much ignored the fact that Value is a relative term. They have

<sup>4</sup> From Canon Cheyne's Address before the Reading Church Congress (1883), cited in his *Job and Solomon*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Selbie in *Expository Times*, March, 1898, p. 374.

taken no sufficient account of the relation between different kinds of Value. But they have never failed sooner or later to reveal the fact that in all their processes their eyes have been fixed upon Value as their ultimate goal. Indeed, their language might even lead one to suppose that they regarded it as the special province of the Higher Criticism to establish rather than merely to determine the value of the books of the Bible.

For Eichhorn, the reputed "father of the Higher Criticism", Value was evidently the main thing. He says:

"For this discovery of the internal condition of the first books of Moses party spirit will perhaps for a pair of 'decennials snort at the Higher Criticism instead of rewarding it with the full thanks due it; for (1) the credibility of the books gains by such use of more ancient documents (2) the harmony of the two narratives at the same time with their slight deviations proves their independence and mutual reliability."<sup>6</sup> Among English-speaking scholars few names are more conspicuously associated with a certain school of criticism than that of the late Dr. W. Robertson Smith. In his Introduction to Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* he says: "Now, to take one point only, but that the most important, it must plainly make a vast difference to our whole view of the providential course of Israel's history if it appears that instead of the whole Pentateuchal law having been given Israel before the tribes crossed the Jordan, that law really grew up little by little from its Mosaic germ, and did not attain its present form until the Israelites were captives or subjects of a foreign power. This is what the new school of Pentateuch criticism undertakes to prove, and does so in a way that should interest every one. For in the course of the argument it appears that the plain natural sense of the old history has been constantly distorted by false presuppositions with which we have been accustomed to approach it—that having a false idea of the

<sup>6</sup> *Einleitung*, cited and translated by Dr. Briggs in his *Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 50.

legal and religious culture of the Hebrews when they first entered Canaan, we continually miss the point of the most interesting parts of the subsequent story and above all fail to understand the great work accomplished by the prophets in destroying the Old Israel and preparing the way first for Judaism and then for the Gospel. These surely are inquiries which no conscientious student of the Bible can afford to ignore."<sup>7</sup>

According to Dr. Smith, then, in determining the origin of the Pentateuch, the Higher Criticism determines also its value both as a history, and as a source of material for a history of Israel. In other words, simply by settling the question of its origin—using that word in its larger sense—the Higher Criticism reveals the fact, so at least Dr. Smith alleges, that the Pentateuch in its present form is at once valueless as a history of Israel and invaluable as a source of material for a history of the covenant people. Hence, according to him, its practical significance and importance. Clearly, therefore, the determination of Value must be the ultimate problem of this science.

The same conclusion follows from the statements of such recent writers as Dr. Briggs and Mr. Harford-Battersby. The former, for instance, informs us that the goal of his own labors as a higher critic has been "to contribute to . . . a higher appreciation of the most ancient documents of our Holy Religion".<sup>8</sup> A "higher appreciation", of course, means a higher estimate of the value of these "most ancient documents". More definitely still he affirms that by solving the problem of the origin of the Pentateuch the Higher Criticism "vindicates its historical credibility".<sup>9</sup> If so, in so doing the Higher Criticism also vindicates the historical value of the Pentateuch. And so Mr. Harford-Battersby gives it as the result of his very elaborate literary analysis of the Book of Exodus that it "is like a grand symphony

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. vii, viii.

<sup>8</sup> *Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. viii.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.



which was once thought to give harmony without discord, but which is now being found, in virtue of the elements which by themselves are sharply discordant, to sound forth a yet richer harmony".<sup>10</sup> So that here again the problem of Origin is seen to terminate upon that of Value.

Discussing the question of the literary form of the Genesis record, Prof. Gunkel declares: "The evangelical churches and their representatives would do well not to dispute the fact that Genesis contains legends—as has been done too frequently—but to recognize that the knowledge of this fact is the indispensable condition to an historical understanding of Genesis."<sup>11</sup> This manifestly is but an expanded way of saying that until we have determined the question of the Form we are in no position to pass upon that of the Value of this Genesis record. In this judgment Dr. W. R. Harper evidently agrees, only he makes both the religious and the historical value of the narratives in Gen. i. to xii. to depend upon our insight into their literary form. His words are: "These stories are not history, for the times are pre-historic. They are the Hebrew version (purged and purified) of the best thoughts of humanity in that earliest period, when man stood alone with nature and with God. It is sacrilege to call them history. To apply to them the tests of history—always cold, stern and severe—is profanation. They are stories, grand, inspiring, unlifting stories."<sup>12</sup>

It is perfectly evident that neither Prof. Gunkel nor Dr. Harper is here concerned with the question of literary form for its own sake. What each of them is concerned to do is correctly to appraise the value of these Genesis records. This, however, they can not do until they have determined the question of literary form. For to settle this question is also to determine what kind of value we are entitled to expect in these narratives. Legends and stories have their

<sup>10</sup> Hastings BD. Vol. I., p. 511.

<sup>11</sup> *The Legends of Genesis*, by Hermann Gunkel, p. 12. Open Court Pub. Co.

<sup>12</sup> *Biblical World*, Feb., 1894, p. 107.

own value, but it is not of a historical kind. In dealing with the problem of Form, therefore, both Prof. Gunkel and Dr. Harper have their eyes upon the problem of Value as their real, ultimate problem.

Evidence similar in effect to that already adduced might, if it were necessary, be multiplied. One more citation, however, must suffice. It is given because of its unequivocal explicitness. It is from the pen of Dr. M'Fadyen, of Knox College, Toronto, Canada. He says: "The problems raised by the historical books of the Old Testament are of exceptional interest and difficulty. But it must never be forgotten that criticism is only a means to an end. It fails if it does not lead us to a more reverent appreciation of the ways of God with men."<sup>13</sup>

Dr. M'Fadyen fails to discriminate. Like most of those already cited, he permits himself to assume that it is the function of the Higher Criticism to vindicate or establish the value of the books of the Bible. This, however, is clearly a mistake. The sole function of the Higher Criticism is to determine Value—a totally different thing from vindicating or establishing it. Further, along with the others who have been cited, he is quite confident that the Higher Criticism as actually employed by himself has really resulted in vindicating the value of the Scripture writings, has really given them a new, stronger, juster claim upon the esteem of men. This, perhaps, is not unnatural. None the less it is simply an evidence of confusion of thought, the causes of which will come up for consideration a little later. Certain it is that the conclusions for which Dr. M'Fadyen stands are not conclusions that have commended themselves to the acceptance of the great mass of sober-minded Christian people. Not only so, but it is becoming more and more evident that these conclusions, where accepted, modify one's view of the value of the Christian religion, and indeed of the very nature of all religion. But, fortunately, the Higher Criticism itself is a larger, safer, saner thing than the conclu-

<sup>13</sup> *The Messages of the Prophetic and Priestly Historian*, p. x.

sions that have been put forth in its name by this particular school of critics. We may hold to it, even though we discard them. At any rate, these critics are unimpeachable witnesses to the fact that the determination of Value is the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism, and this is our only present concern with their statements.

The statements quoted do more than prove that the determination of Value is the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism. They show that our problem stands in need of being rendered yet more precise and definite. For they plainly reveal the fact that there are more kinds of value than one. Further, they show that the same writing may possess more kinds of value than one, and also that it may have much value of one sort, and little or none at all of another. Finally, they show that there may be much confusion and difference of opinion as to the precise kind of value to be allowed to the very same books of the Bible. Thus Dr. Briggs affirms that the Higher Criticism vindicates the historical credibility of the Pentateuch; Dr. W. Robertson Smith virtually denies to it any value as a history, but regards it as of great value as a source of material for a history of Israel; Dr. Harper denies to it the value of history, but extols its religious value; and, finally, Professor Gunkel lays most stress upon its æsthetic value. Now, all this raises some important questions. One is: Is the Higher Criticism equally concerned with the determination of all these kinds of Value? If not, which of them is it specially concerned to determine? Another question equally necessary to be asked is, What, if any, is the relation between these several kinds of value—historical and religious, for instance? Until these questions are intelligently answered the Higher Criticism will resemble nothing so much as a “go as you please” race with a “choose as you please” goal. Such indefiniteness would be fatal to its pretensions as a science. Science desiderates nothing more than precision.

Obviously the Higher Criticism takes account of more kinds of Value than one. This is on the very face of the

statements already cited. It is not, however, equally concerned with each of the several kinds of Value of which, at one time or another, and in one way or another, it takes account. For just as the Higher Criticism deals with the problems of Origin and Form, not for their own sakes, but because of their bearing upon the problem of Value, so it deals with all other values, not for their own sakes, but because of their bearing, real or supposed, upon the determination of religious value. This again is a truth which, while never wholly lost sight of, can scarcely be said ever to have been distinctly perceived or firmly grasped. Occasionally, indeed, it has even been indirectly and, we may suppose, inadvertently denied. Thus, for instance, we find Dr. Briggs saying: "The question of the authorship of the Bible is whether God is its author, whether it is inspired. This can not be determined by the Higher Criticism in any way, for the Higher Criticism has only to do with human authorship and has nothing to do with divine authorship, which is determined on different principles."<sup>14</sup> Plausible as this sounds, it is hardly consistent with the most natural meaning of Dr. Briggs' words, when he declares that the crowning aim of his own labors as a higher critic has been "to contribute to . . . a higher appreciation of the most ancient documents of our Holy Religion."<sup>15</sup> This language points most naturally to religious value as the specific value in the writer's thoughts when penning these words. At any rate, religious value will be found to be the specific value upon the determination of which the efforts of all critics have, either consciously and professedly, or else unconsciously and actually converged. This is the Value explicitly stressed by Drs. Harper and M'Fadyen, and impliedly stressed by Mr. Harford-Battersby. Professor Gunkel also finds what he calls "The legends of Genesis" of more value for religious edification than would be straightforward historical narratives. Dr. Geo. A. Smith is reported recently

<sup>14</sup> *Wither?* p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> *Vide sup.*, p. 460.

to have said, "The criticism of to-day is not directed to the historical trustworthiness of the Bible so much as to its moral validity."<sup>16</sup> Moral and religious value are, of course, not identical, but Dr. Smith's remark shows the trend.

So great and disastrous has been the confusion prevailing upon this point that I feel constrained to present further and even more decisive evidence for the correctness of the doctrine just laid down. In 1892 Canon Cheyne put forth a volume of sermons and addresses under the title of "*Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*".<sup>17</sup> The purpose of the volume was to exploit the Higher Criticism, as employed by Canon Cheyne and his school, as an aid to a rational religious faith. Indeed, its contention was that the Higher Criticism is an indispensable organ for arriving at a right religious valuation of the Scripture narratives. Take, for instance, the following language: "We shall be verily guilty concerning our brother if we allow him to drift among the icebergs of doubt for want of an intelligent knowledge of the Bible. Indeed, the whole Christian family will be injured, if we do not discover some better way of preserving true reverence for the Old Testament, and more especially for its narratives. But is there any way left that might be tried in popular teaching? Yes; there is one which until lately has been neglected; it is to throw upon the Old Testament the full light of critical research. God has put it into the heart of an increasing number of Christian scholars to apply improved methods to the study of the Scriptures, and they wish now to turn their results to account in the practical service of the Church. It is but too certain that our popular religion needs simplifying, and that the defence of Christian truth against infidelity needs strengthening, and these objects can, it would seem, be best promoted by a league of inquiring Christian people on the one hand and the scholars of whom I spoke on the other. . . . Its object

<sup>16</sup> Address before the Edinburg Sabbath Morning Fellowship Union, cited in *Bible Criticism and the Average Man*, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Some regarded this title as too suggestive to be really felicitous.

will be to apply modern methods of study to the Old Testament with just sufficient precision to bring out the gradualness of divine revelation, to emphasize and illustrate the essential facts and truths of the Scriptures, and to solve the difficulties and correct the misapprehensions of infidel objectors. . . . But some timid Christian may ask, Had I not better leave this study to those who have to meet infidel objectors in controversy? May I not, by being too venturesome, expose my own faith to a severe shock? Historical truth may be good, but spiritual truth is better; why should I not be content with the one thing needful? To which I would reply, with heartfelt sympathy, that vital faith in spiritual truth cannot be imperiled by historical inquiry into its records, that on the contrary there are few better aids to faith than a historical view of the progress of revelation, such as the higher study of the Bible presents to us."<sup>18</sup>

Now, all of this is very explicit. Canon Cheyne speaks here as one who, having tested to his own satisfaction a given method of attaining a specific end, is commending that method to others who wish to attain the same end. And the end, it will be observed, is nothing else than a truer insight into and a juster appreciation of the religious value of the Bible. The method commended is the Higher Criticism.

"*Principles and Ideals for Sunday School*" is the title of a recent book, a production of the joint authorship of Drs. Burton and Mathews, of Chicago University. What may be called the fundamental postulate of the book is that "The Sunday School is a religious institution". Its aim is "to secure, through teaching of the Bible as the chief means, the conversion of the pupil and his development in Christian character".<sup>19</sup> But, in order that the teaching of the Bible may become effective to the attainment of this end, "it will be needful also for the teacher, especially for the teacher of the more mature pupils, to adopt for himself and to impart

<sup>18</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 17, 18.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 4, 5.

to his pupils a proper method in the use of the Bible. . . .”<sup>20</sup> Now, according to Drs. Burton and Mathews, a correct conception of the Bible implies that it is not only “a collection of literature”, but that “this literature is also the record and product of a historical and a developing revelation”.<sup>21</sup> What they regard as involved in such a conception of the Bible they make perfectly plain. For they immediately proceed to add: “It is not difficult to help pupils to see this development. The painstaking effort of scholars, however much they may differ among themselves as to details, has placed beyond dispute this fact, that in the Bible we have the literary productions of every stage of the rise and fall of the Hebrew people. The saga, the folk-tale, the chronicle of the pre-literary period; the history and legislation, political and religious teaching of national maturity; the lamentation, the prayer and the song of praise and faith from years of national misery—all these have gone to make up the Old Testament.”<sup>22</sup> If, now, the question be asked, How may one obtain this conception of the Bible? The answer which these gentlemen uniformly give is, in the use of the “historical method”. But the historical method is only a one-sided, quasi-popular name for the Higher Criticism. Thus we are again brought, by a rather circuitous route, to see that the determination of religious value constitutes the ultimate and the practical problem of the Higher Criticism.

Few lectures of late days have produced quite such a profound stir as those, by Dr. Friedrich Delitzsch, of Germany, entitled *Babel and Bible*. Now, as any one who will be at the pains to read the lectures may see for himself, the object of these lectures is to appraise the religious value of the Old Testament by means of what Dr. Delitzsch calls “scientific criticism”, which is only another name for the Higher Criticism. To do this, he simply sets the teachings of the Old Testament in the light of their origin as determined by their

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<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

internal characteristics, when these are correlated with the findings of archæology. It is true that his conclusions have been most roundly, and I must add astonishingly, denounced in quarters where he had every reason to expect only unqualified approval. With this, however, I have nothing to do. Perhaps it ought to have ceased to be surprising to find men shrinking back from the conclusions demanded by their own logic, especially when those conclusions are stated in their naked repulsiveness. In this case, for instance, the core of Dr. Delitzsch's offending lies in the fact that he finds it impossible to regard as a "revelation" what the Higher Criticism, *se judice*, shows to be a "tradition" amalgamated "out of heterogeneous sources".<sup>23</sup>

It is unnecessary for me to disavow any personal sympathy with the conclusions reached either by Dr. Delitzsch or by Drs. Burton and Mathews, or by Canon Cheyne. It is worth while, however, for me to remind the reader that the Higher Criticism, as such, is in no sense responsible for the conclusions of these scholars. In the case of all of them, their conclusions are due to the influence of certain presuppositions, and the introduction of certain material errors into their reasoning rather than to their critical processes in the abstract.

Apart, however, from express statements from any source whatever, the very nature of the case shows that if the determination of Value be the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism, the ultimate value to be determined must be the religious value of the books of Scripture. For above everything else these books are religious literature. Religious value is the specific kind of value that they arrogate to themselves. Religious value is the kind of value that above all others is claimed for them. Obviously, therefore, either to ignore this value or to subordinate it to any other would be a capital blunder. Not only so, but whatever other kinds of value the books of the Bible may possess fall to be con-

<sup>23</sup> *Babel and Bible. Also Embodying the Most Important Criticisms and the Author's Replies.* Open Court Pub. Co., August, 1903, p. 165.



sidered by the Higher Criticism only because they bear upon this ultimate Value, and only as they bear upon it. The determination of other kinds of value, as such, belongs to other disciplines. Thus literary criticism has it for its special function to appraise the literary and æsthetic worth or value of the Scripture writings as truly as of any others. Historical Criticism, again, has it as its special function to determine the historical worth or value of such of the books of the Bible as present themselves to us under the guise of history, as truly as of any other books assuming that form. Hence, to deny that the ultimate Value sought to be determined by the Higher Criticism is religious value, is to leave this discipline without any special function. But that is to deny to it the character of a distinct and separate discipline at all.

Just here we must guard ourselves against a mistake. The Higher Criticism is not to be identified with the discipline known as the "Internal Evidences". Both disciplines, it is true, seek to determine the religious value of the Bible. Both likewise rely exclusively upon what is known as internal evidence. They approach their common goal, however, each in its own characteristic way. The Higher Criticism, for one thing, takes account of only certain internal characteristics of the writing with which it deals, viz., the literary, historical, psychological, and thought phenomena found in the writings. But further, it views these phenomena not as they may bear directly upon religious value, but solely as they bear upon the determination of Origin and Form. And to the light derived from these problems, *i. e.*, the problems of Origin and Form, it restricts itself exclusively in determining the religious value of a writing. In other words, the Higher Criticism determines the value of a writing, not directly, but only through the problems of Origin and Form. This obviously is something very different from the method of procedure in the case of the Internal Evidences. The latter goes much more directly

to its goal, and goes also by a much greater variety of routes. The Higher Criticism, therefore, is, at best, but a branch, and a rather limited branch, of the Internal Evidences.

Some, no doubt, will regard the restrictions thus placed upon the Higher Criticism as too severe. They may even suppose that they strip the science of all real dignity and importance. This, however, will be the judgment of those only who either underestimate the value and importance of the literary, historical, psychological and thought phenomena of a writing for determining its Origin and Form; or of those who underestimate the value and importance of Origin and Form for the determination of religious value. Moreover, the restrictions proposed are demanded in the interest of the Higher Criticism as an independent discipline, in the interests of clearness when treating its problems and registering its conclusions, and finally by fidelity to the actual course of its history.

We are now prepared, I trust, for a more accurate definition than has previously been possible. The Higher Criticism, then, may be defined to be the science of the processes by which the religious value of a writing is determined upon the basis of its Origin and Form, these latter problems in their turn being determined on the basis of internal characteristics, such as the literary, historical, psychological, and thought phenomena found in the writing.

If the positions laid down above are correct, it is something to have gotten so far. But even now we may lose our goal in a fog. For no sooner is it declared that the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism is to determine the religious value of the books of the Bible than we are presented with a threefold difficulty. For the following questions at once emerge: (1) Who shall furnish a standard by which to estimate religious value? There are, perhaps, few important subjects upon which men's views differ more radically. In fact, a writer of some prominence has recently asserted that, "Scholars cannot agree as to the definition of

religion nor as to its classification . . . ."<sup>24</sup> (2) Again, it will be said: since, upon any view whatever, the several books of Scripture proceeded from a variety of authors, living in a variety of different places, and at widely separated periods of time, how can the determination of Origin be made to bear upon the question of religious value? And since the Bible contains a great variety of literary forms, How can the determination of Form be made to bear upon that of religious value? (3) And, finally, it will be asked, Is it possible to determine religious value by the only data which the Higher Criticism is at liberty to take account of, viz., the literary, historical, psychological and thought phenomena found in the writings themselves? These last two objections were probably what was in the mind of Dr. Briggs when he asserted that "the Higher Criticism has only to do with human authorship and has nothing to do with divine authorship, which is determined on different principles."<sup>25</sup>

A moment's consideration, however, will convince any one that the last of these objections has no independent force. I have stated it merely because it may be made to appear to less thoughtful persons to have such force. In reality the Higher Criticism does not employ literary, historical, psychological or thought phenomena for the direct determination of religious value. This may be done and is properly done in what is known as the "Internal Evidences". In the Higher Criticism, however, these phenomena are used solely for the determination of Origin and Form, and so only indirectly affect the determination of religious value. This objection, therefore, need not detain us longer.

A complete answer to the second objection would necessitate a full discussion of the problems of Origin and Form, which would be out of place at this point. Two or three general remarks ought to be sufficient to strip it of whatever

<sup>24</sup> Dr. G. W. Knox, *American Journal of Theology*, Oct., 1902. Cited in THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW, July, 1903, p. 497.

<sup>25</sup> *Vide sup.*, p. 464.

superficial plausibility it may possess. Perhaps the most practical answer to it is a fact patent to all who do not deliberately close their eyes — the fact, namely, that men's judgment as to the religious value of the books of the Bible has been and is to-day being modified, or rather, determined by their views as to the origin and form of these books. Of the truth of this statement, Dr. Friedrich Delitzsch is, perhaps, the most conspicuous recent illustration. Again, religious value is, or in any particular case may be, a matter of degree. But surely no one will be so rash as to say that the degree of religious value possessed by a writing will be in no wise affected by its origin or its literary form. If such be the case, where would be the propriety of cautioning readers, as is sometimes very solemnly done, that as they regard the religious value of the first chapter of Genesis, or of the Book of Jonah, they must not see in either of them a historical record? Further, there is a palpable relation between the character, qualifications, commission, claims and methods of a writer, and the literary, historical and religious value of his production. Further still, despite denials, there is a certain just and even necessary connection between historical, and even literary value on the one hand and religious value on the other. Finally, this objection—and the same remark applies also to the first objection—if valid would simply prove that there is no place for the Higher Criticism as an independent science.

We recur now to the first objection. It, in fact, is the only one of the three that has any real plausibility. It, however, is merely plausible, nothing more. If the ultimate problem of the Higher Criticism be to determine the religious value of the books of the Bible, or claimed for these books, by setting them in the light of their origin and literary form, who, it is asked, shall furnish us a standard of religious value, or even a definition of religion? This question is one fair enough in itself, but is apt to mislead. For the Higher Criticism takes account not only of Value, but also of claims as to value. Further, it takes account not

only of the claims as to value which a writing makes for itself, but equally of those made for it by others. Finally, while it may be powerless to establish the truth of these claims, it may be all-powerful to demolish them. The Quran, for instance, and the Book of Mormon, equally with the Scriptures, claim to be a revelation from God. But will any one say that the Higher Criticism cannot dispose of their respective claims by setting these writings in the light of their origin and their literary form? Why, then, may it not do the same in the case of the books of the Bible? But will it be maintained that the religious value of the Bible will remain unaffected whatever the fate of the claims as to the origin and form of its several books which it makes for itself, or that are made for it? It is hard indeed to conceive of a definition of religion under which this would be true: and yet when one considers the ideas of religion now current, he is warned to refrain from rashly fixing the limits of possibility in this direction.

But apart from all such considerations as those just adduced, it is to be noticed that the Bible presents its own conception of religion. This, moreover, it affirms to be the only true conception. What this Bible definition of religion is, we need not now pause to inquire. Whatever it may be, it would seem obvious that the primary function of the Higher Criticism is to test—not this Biblical conception of religion, for to do this does not fall within the province of the Higher Criticism—but to test the religious value of the books of the Bible by the conception of religion which the Bible itself furnishes. Let us suppose, for example, that the Bible idea of religion is that it consists in right thoughts of and right inner and outer relations to the living God, based upon a written revelation of His character and His will. Then the function of the Higher Criticism will be to determine whether and in what sense the several books of Scripture are a revelation, and whether and how far they tend to guide men to right views of the character and right personal relations to the living God, so far as this can be

done by setting each of these books in the light of its origin and its literary form.

But whether the above be a correct account of the Bible conception of religion or not, and whether this Bible conception of religion itself be correct or not, the important fact to fix in our minds is that there must be some definition of religion posited before any judgment upon the religious value of the books of Scripture is possible, and that the conception of religion posited, whatever it may be, will necessarily control the judgment of religious value based upon it. If this is overlooked the gravest confusion must ensue. Because this has been overlooked the most serious confusion has already ensued. Because, for example, critics who hold the most divergent and even contradictory views in regard to the origin and form of the book of Genesis agree in pronouncing it to be of unequaled religious value, many thoughtless persons have jumped to the conclusion that the differences between these critics upon the question of Origin and Form amount to little or nothing. Religious value, it is said, and truly said, is the main thing, and these critics agree as to the religious value of the books of the Bible, therefore the Bible has nothing to fear from Criticism. This is the vice of all well meant irenicons, like *Bible Criticism and the Average Man*. It is doubtless even truer than those who use this style of reasoning suppose, that the Bible has nothing to fear from Criticism. But the superficiality of their reasoning is evident, as soon as it is perceived that the opposing critics referred to above agree in their estimate of the religious value of the books of the Bible *only because* they disagree *toto caelo* in their respective conceptions of religion itself.

It should be clearly understood, however, that to maintain that the problems of Origin and Form are always of fundamental importance to the determination of Value is not to make the Higher Criticism the only or the ultimate arbiter of Value. Such is not the case. To affirm with Professor Francis Brown, for instance, that, "If questions which the

Higher Criticism seeks to answer cannot be answered by its methods, then there is no answer for them at all",<sup>26</sup> is to take a position that will not finally commend itself to sober minds. It unduly exaggerates the importance of internal evidence. It unduly magnifies our dependence upon internal characteristics for light upon the questions of Origin and Form and Value. It affects a distrust of what is called "tradition" and of "authority" that is at once unreasonable and unwarranted. "Tradition" is either a mere term of objurgation, or else a term of scientific definition. When used, as it too often is, in the former sense, that is, as a term of abuse, it need not detain us, nor disturb us. It is a mere expletive of impotent contempt. When used as a term of definition "tradition" includes all testimony proceeding from others than contemporaries, and ought in fairness to cover all the evidence not based upon what in our courts is called "personal knowledge". To discredit all testimony from others than actual contemporaries does not, to put it mildly, show sobriety of judgment. It is not only an unreasonable, but, in the light of actual experience, it is an unwarrantable procedure. In other words, experience proves beyond dispute that testimony from others than contemporaries—*i. e.*, "tradition" in the only tolerable sense of that word, in such a discussion as this—may be and often has been thoroughly reliable. Every thing depends upon the character and competence of the source from which the "tradition" proceeds. Indeed, even those who profess least respect for "tradition" are unwilling and unwitting witnesses to the claims that it justly has upon our consideration. The proof is, that they can never rest in their conclusions based upon internal evidence until they have impugned the character or competence, or both of all those Scripture personages whose statements either directly or indirectly impinge upon their conclusions. And in doing this, they are unquestionably wise. For no declamation against "tradition" in the abstract will avail

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<sup>26</sup> *Homiletic Review*, April, 1892. Cited by Dr. Zenos, *Elements of Higher Criticism*, p. 143.

to weaken the force of the testimony say of the Chronicler to the origin of the Pentateuch. He must be impeached, or his testimony, though not that of a contemporary, and therefore falling under the head of "tradition", will with ordinary persons set aside the most confident conclusions based upon internal evidence. The reason of this is not that thoughtful persons depreciate the importance of "internal evidence". It may be admitted that "internal evidence" is of the nature of "personal testimony", direct, first hand evidence. It may be admitted that when it really speaks to a point, what it really says is final. The trouble is that there are some points to which it does not speak, and there are others upon which it does not speak unequivocally. Further, experience proves that as an unsophisticated witness in the hands of a skillful lawyer may by leading questions be brought to make statements that are utterly untrue and the farthest thing from the real intention of the witness, so the "internal evidence" may by proper manipulation be made to furnish a basis for conclusions utterly unwarranted by the facts. Indeed, "internal evidence", like all circumstantial evidence, needs in all ordinary cases to be handled with the utmost caution, candor and judicial reserve, or it may seriously mislead. It is neither wise nor necessary, therefore, to pit "internal evidence" against "tradition" in the sense in which I have defined the latter term. It is far from wise to stake our decision of the grave problems of the Higher Criticism solely upon our construction, or the construction which any particular set of scholars place upon the "internal evidence". "Tradition" has repeatedly justified itself as more trustworthy than the construction put upon the "internal evidence" by scholars of unquestionable and acknowledged ability.

Neither should we be misled by current contempt for "authority". Let us rather hope that this is merely a passing phase of intellectual bumptiousness and confused thought. To say that the problems of the Higher Criticism cannot be settled by "authority" is either to say



that there are no persons who are competent to settle them in the use of internal evidence or otherwise; or it is to say that for the great majority of mankind they cannot be settled at all. For, whatever the process employed to solve the problems of the Higher Criticism, provided it really solves them, he who is master of that process is in a position authoritatively to solve those problems for any and all others. Else why do we hear so much about the "assured results" of a certain school of critics? This label so conspicuously in evidence upon their goods would seem to have but one possible object, namely, to beget in the public the conviction that there are those who are competent to settle these vexing questions for them. But, if so, then these questions can be settled by authority. And if they can be settled by authority, who shall say that they may not be settled upon the authority of our Lord and His apostles? What if our Lord assumes the ability and the right to settle them? Shall we repudiate his authority at this point? After all, for most persons, so far as these problems are concerned, it is simply a question as to whether they will accept their solution of them from Christ and His apostles, or from certain modern scholars who, *quoad hoc*, affect to be better informed and safer guides than Christ Himself.

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