

Letter to the Editor.

HIGHER CRITICISM AND HIGHER CRITICISM.

DEAR EDITOR,

In his article in the *CHURCHMAN* for October, my friend the Rev. J. A. Harriss writes as follows: "Some of us are at the present time not a little concerned as to the line of thought which the Evangelical School as a whole means to take in regard to that wide and pressing movement that goes by the name of the Higher Criticism. We are asked by some of our number to adopt an attitude of uncompromising hostility to it."

It is obvious that everything depends upon the meaning of that last little word "it." If I understand one thing by "it" and Mr. Harriss something quite different, we shall not profit your readers by disputing about it.

Professor Orr, in his valuable work "The Bible under Trial," thus describes "the Higher Criticism": "The Church is deeply concerned at the moment with the bearings and issues of what is called 'the Higher Criticism. . . .' I do not believe—and the reception given to my own volume ('The Problem of the Old Testament') confirms me in this opinion—that any really devout student of the Bible desires to tie up honest inquiry on any question of author, origin, date, or mode of composition of the Biblical books which does not involve clear contradiction of the Bible's own testimony on these subjects. By all means, if any traditional opinion can be shown by valid reasoning on sound data to be in error on such points, let it be corrected. The feeling as to the type of Higher Criticism now in vogue goes much deeper. What is felt is that this newer school of criticism—commonly known as the 'Wellhausen' school, from its most distinguished representative—really subverts the basis of a reasonable faith in the Bible and of a revelation of God contained in it altogether" (p. 13).

Professor Sayce, in his book "Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies," writes in his Preface: "The words 'criticism,' 'critical,' and 'critic' have been printed between inverted commas wherever they refer to the school of sceptical theorists who have arrogated the title of 'critics' to themselves. It is needless to add that I, for one, do not admit their title to do so." Again, Dr. Sayce writes: "In dealing with the history of the past, we are thus confronted with two utterly opposed methods, one objective, the other subjective; one resting on a basis of verifiable facts, the other on the unsupported and unsupportable assumptions of the modern scholar. The one is the method of archæology, the other of the so-called 'Higher Criticism.' Between the two the scientifically trained mind can have no hesitation in choosing" (p. 17). "In truth, the archæological discoveries of the last half-dozen years in Egypt and Crete have once for all discredited the claim of 'criticism' to apply its theories of development to the settlement of chronological and historical questions" (p. 119).

Dr. Orr, in his "Problem of the Old Testament," writes: "The main stream of the critical movement . . . continues to spread itself over the entire field of patriarchal and Mosaic history in a broad flood of scepticism" (p. 59); and (on p. 478) "A grave peril growing out of a long train of con-

ditions in the spirit of the age has arisen which cannot be too early or too resolutely faced."

It is evident, therefore, that when Mr. Harriss deprecates "uncompromising hostility" to the Higher Criticism, we must begin to distinguish between criticism and criticism.

To criticism which elucidates the history and meaning of Holy Scripture, without accepting principles and adopting a standpoint which deny or minimize the supernatural, no Evangelical will be hostile. But to criticism of the Wellhausen type, which, be it remembered, is the standpoint of the dominant Higher Criticism of to-day, no one who is truly Evangelical can help offering an "uncompromising hostility."

Yours,

A. M. W. CHRISTOPHER.

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Literary Notes.

DR. H. F. HELMOLT is editing a very comprehensive work on "The World's History." I suppose it will be as complete a survey of man's record as has ever been published. The work is to have an introductory essay by Mr. Bryce. There will be, altogether, some eight octavo volumes, which will include many maps, coloured plates, and black-and-white illustrations. It is hoped that the work will be completed either by the end of this year or at the beginning of next. The plan of the undertaking is a compromise between two methods. On the one hand, special sections are devoted to each geographical unit of the world's surface; and in this connexion one may point out that the history of the seas and oceans has been treated with as much care as that of the continents. Since there are broad movements and forces in history which cut across the lines of geographical boundaries, another set of sections has been devoted to the history of groups or communities of nations which have from time to time been formed by the operation of economic force, racial ties, and intellectual sympathies. The work will be published at six pounds net.



It seems to the writer that there is a growing interest in the writings of the Fathers of the Reformation. One is continually finding works devoted to the study of their lives and their writings. It is surely a proof of this increased interest when books are constantly being written with the object of shaking the Protestant belief in the great value of the Reformation. Only the other day Dom. H. N. Birt published a volume in which he sought very earnestly to discredit the view that the people of the period hailed the Reformation as a blessing! I often wonder whether the work which the Wyclif Society is doing is as really known as it ought to be. It was founded some twenty-five years ago with the express object of bringing within the reach of students the works of John Wyclif, which until then had only existed in manuscript. Now, this is a very praiseworthy and laudable object. Since