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A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bib-sacra\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php)

# BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

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## SOME STRICTURES ON CURRENT CONCEPTIONS OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM

PROFESSOR WILLIAM MARCELLUS MCPHEETERS, D.D., LL.D.  
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

THE salient features of current conceptions of Biblical Criticism are few and soon stated. They are four in number, and all center around the adjective "Biblical." To begin with, the inherent ambiguity of the adjective itself is universally ignored. Again, the adjective is invested with the absolutely restricted denotation that originally attached to the noun "Bible" as used of the Christian Scriptures. Finally, the very precise and definite connotation of the term "Bible," as originally used, has in current usage likewise been transferred to the adjective "Biblical." The inevitable consequence has been that current usage applies the designation "Biblical Criticism" to disciplines that are not entitled to it, and excludes from recognition the only discipline properly entitled to be so designated.

The purpose of the present discussion is to show that the foregoing are the characteristic features of current usage; and that they constitute defects the consequences of which are sufficiently grave to demand attention and a serious effort to inaugurate a sounder usage. But before attempting either of these aims, it will be advisable to indicate more fully what I mean by the only discipline properly entitled to be called Biblical Criticism. Here a brief consideration of certain other familiar terms the exact connotation of which is firmly established, and universally recognized, will furnish valuable and needed light.

Homeric Criticism is such a term. It designates not a  
VOL. LXXVII. No. 306. 1

branch or species, but a field of Criticism, namely, the writings of Homer. In contrast with this, Historical Criticism designates, not a field, but a branch or species of Criticism, namely, that branch or species of Criticism which in contrast with all others, and to the exclusion of all others, concerns itself with historical problems and with historical phenomena. Chaucerian, Goethean, Dantean Criticism, and the like, are terms parallel to Homeric Criticism. In each of these cases the adjective employed designates, not the nature of the problems or the phenomena with which some specific branch of Criticism is engaged, but merely the sphere or field within which any one or all of several perfectly distinct species of Criticism may find its appropriate phenomena, with their respective problems. On the contrary, in the case of such terms as Historical, Literary, Linguistic, and Textual Criticism, and the like, the adjective prefixed to the term Criticism designates the distinctive problems and phenomena to which, to the exclusion of all others, the attention of Criticism is directed and confined. In the case of the latter group of terms, Criticism is the name of a genus, of which Historical, Literary, Linguistic, and Textual Criticism are the species. But the same is not true of the former group. Homeric, Goethean, and Dantean Criticism are not species of the genus Criticism. Accordingly, when engaged upon the writings of Homer, for instance, Historical, Literary, Linguistic, and Textual Criticism are not divisions, or subspecies, of a *proximum genus* known as Homeric Criticism. There is no such proximate genus of Criticism. Further, neither Historical, Literary, Linguistic, nor Textual Criticism undergoes any substantive modification of character when engaged upon the Homeric poems, the writings of Dante, or the works of Chaucer, any more than a bee becomes a new species when it passes from a rose to a cactus.

But for the fact that in the case of the phrase Biblical Criticism the adjective may with equal propriety designate either a species of Criticism or a specific field of Criticism,

the foregoing remarks would not have been called for. Unfortunately, however, the meaning of the adjective is thus equivocal. Biblical Criticism may properly be used to designate a particular group of writings as the sphere within which several distinct branches or species of Criticism each finds its own appropriate phenomena and problems. But it may with equal propriety be used as the name of a specific branch or species of Criticism. Obviously in the latter case Biblical Criticism will be a distinct discipline, coördinate with such disciplines as Historical, Literary, Linguistic, and Textual Criticism. And by the same token Historical, Literary, Linguistic, and Textual Criticism can never be branches or subspecies of Biblical Criticism. Further, where the term Biblical Criticism is used to designate a branch or species of Criticism, the adjective Biblical — as in the case of the adjectives Historical, Literary, Linguistic, and Textual — will define the nature of the problems and the phenomena to which this particular branch of Criticism limits its attention. Just as Historical Criticism is concerned exclusively with the problem of origin in one or another of its forms, and Literary Criticism with the problem of literary morphology in one or another of its forms; so Biblical Criticism Proper will concern itself exclusively with the problem of biblicality and the phenomena of biblicality.

What, then, is the problem of biblicality? To answer this question we have only to remind ourselves of the original connotation of the word "Bible." "The Bible," as everybody knows, means simply "the Book." And again, as everybody knows, its application to the Christian Scriptures originated in the fact that those so applying it regarded these particular books as an inspired documentation of a special, direct, supernatural revelation, mediated by God through specially chosen and specially qualified agents, and through a series of specially ordered experiences and providential events. And though in later usage the term bible has come to be employed as a common noun, still as such it means any book claiming to be

the inspired documentation of a special, direct, supernatural revelation. The problem of biblicality, therefore, is just the problem raised by this claim. In the case of any given writing or group of writings for which this claim is set up, the question of biblicality will be, Does this writing or this group of writings possess the qualities or characteristics implicated in the name "bible"? Though inseparably connected with the problem of the origin of the writing or writings in question, and with that of the literary forms employed in them, this problem of biblicality is still perfectly distinct from either of these latter problems: as much so as either of them is distinct from the other.

Obviously, in the light of what has just been said, biblical phenomena, or the phenomena of biblicality, will be data germane to or arising out of biblicality; data evidencing or alleged to evidence biblicality. That is to say, they will be phenomena evidencing or alleged to evidence "inspiration," or "revelation"; phenomena emerging or alleged to have emerged in connection with the mediation or the documentation of the revelation embodied or alleged to be embodied in the writing or writings whose claim is under investigation. No doubt as they lie in the biblical text these specifically biblical phenomena will be found to be embedded in grammatical, textual, historical, literary, and other phenomena, but they will in reality be as distinct from these others as is the gold ore from the quartz rock, or the river sand with which it is intimately intermixed, and from which it has to be separated before it can be effectively utilized. How intimately one group of phenomena may be intermixed with others of a wholly different kind receives striking illustration from the fact that it has led even to the confusion of Literary with Historical Criticism, as when Bentley's famous achievement in the case of the "Epistles of Phalaris" is spoken of as though it were a triumph of "Literary Criticism." But not only was the problem upon which Bentley was engaged one of origin, and so an historical problem, but the data

that he employed in its solution were not "literary phenomena," but *notes of origin*—local or temporal—impressed upon, or, so to speak, held in solution, in literary phenomena. As well confound the seaweed with the amber in which it is sometimes found embedded. No more do biblical phenomena cease to be such merely because found in intimate fusion with grammatical, historical, and other phenomena.

If now we turn to current discussions of Biblical Criticism we shall find that these fundamental and obvious distinctions have been entirely ignored. Anything like a complete conspectus of usage is of course forbidden by a lack of space. Nor is it necessary for present purposes. Statements presenting the views of a few representative writers will be sufficient to put the case fairly before us. The views of Samuel Davidson will serve as a starting point. Davidson identifies Biblical with Textual Criticism. He says:—

"The term Biblical Criticism is employed in two senses. In the one it embraces not only the restoration of the text of the Scriptures to its original state, but also the principles of interpretation. In the other it is confined to the former of these two branches. We intend to use it in its strict and proper sense, as comprising the sum and substance of that knowledge, which enables us to ascertain . . . as nearly as possible, the original words written by the inspired authors."<sup>1</sup>

But how little ground Davidson has for saying that such is "the strict and proper sense" of the term will soon be apparent. Dr. Philip Schaff, for instance, tells us that "Biblical Criticism, in the technical sense, is divided into Textual or Verbal, and Literary or Historical Criticism."<sup>2</sup> But Dr. Schaff speaks with as little authority as Dr. Da-

<sup>1</sup> Biblical Criticism (Edinburgh, 1839), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Theological Propædeutic, p. 153. Had a tyro thus unequally yoked together "Textual or Verbal" Criticism and "Literary or Historical" Criticism, one might simply have smiled. But when a veteran scholar of Dr. Schaff's attainments thus plows with "an ox and an ass" it is discouraging.

vidson, for Bishops Crooks and Hurst make the main divisions of Biblical Criticism to be Canonics and Textual Criticism.<sup>1</sup> And, in his introduction to Dr. F. R. Beattie's "Radical Criticism," Dr. W. W. Moore says:—

"The science of Biblical Criticism naturally falls into three main divisions; viz., the Lower Criticism, which is concerned with the accuracy of the biblical text; the Higher Criticism, which is concerned with the age and character of the biblical books; and Exegetical Criticism, which is concerned with the meaning of the biblical statements."<sup>2</sup>

The Lutheran scholar Dr. J. A. W. Haas again shifts the distribution for us, and elects to make the divisions of Biblical Criticism to be Textual, Literary, and Historical Criticism.<sup>3</sup> And with Mr. George J. Reid, in the "Catholic Encyclopædia," it shifts again, and we have two "departments" of Biblical Criticism; namely, Textual Criticism and the Higher Criticism, under which latter term he includes such heterogeneous disciplines as "philological, historical, and archæological science."<sup>4</sup> And now we feel no surprise when we find that Dr. C. A. Briggs conceives the matter somewhat differently. From him we learn that "Biblical Criticism in its larger sense" embraces "the

<sup>1</sup>Theological Encyclopædia and Methodology, p. 204.

<sup>2</sup>*Op. cit.*, p. 5. The English scholar Dr. Alfred Cave, while he does not, that I recall, use the term Biblical Criticism, proposes the same distribution as Dr. Moore. Dr. Cave, however, distributes the so-called "Higher Criticism" into Literary and Historical Criticism.

"Higher Criticism," as used by biblical scholars, is itself, I may remark in passing, another interesting specimen of our atavistic nomenclature. It is Eichhorn's evil legacy to biblical scholarship. Born of confused thinking, a breeder of confusion and bitterness, serving no useful purpose whatever, this term ought long since to have been dishonorably discharged from the vocabulary of biblical scholars. As used by Eichhorn, it is in reality merely a misnomer for that branch of Lower Historical Criticism properly designated as Analytical Criticism. See Langlois and Seignobos, Introduction to the Study of History, chap. iii.

<sup>3</sup>Biblical Criticism, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>*Op. cit.*, vol. iv. p. 491, col. 2.

several departments of biblical literature.”<sup>1</sup> These he had previously stated to be “Biblical Canonics, the Lower or Textual Criticism, and the Higher Criticism.”<sup>2</sup> And in yet another connection he informs his readers that

“The principles and methods of Biblical Criticism will thus embrace (1) those of Criticism in general, (2) of Historical Criticism, (3) of Literary Criticism, and (4) of Biblical Criticism.”<sup>3</sup>

This very incomplete review of current notions of Biblical Criticism may be brought to a conclusion by noticing the views recently presented by two leading scholars. Writing in the last edition of the “Encyclopædia Britannica,” Professor G. B. Gray says:—

“The aim of scientific Old Testament criticism is to obtain, through discrimination between truth and error, a full appreciation of the literature which constitutes the Old Testament, of the life out of which it grew, and the secret of the influence which these have exerted and still exert. For such an appreciation many things are needed; and the branches of Old Testament criticism are correspondingly numerous.”<sup>4</sup>

These, apparently, he embraces under two main heads; namely, Textual or Lower Criticism, and Higher Criticism, which, with Professor Gray, is simply an alternative name for what he calls “critical exegesis,” and distributes under

<sup>1</sup> Biblical Study, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82. The importance of this latter statement is that it seems to indicate that Dr. Briggs dimly recognized that what I have ventured to call Biblical Criticism Proper is an indispensable biblical discipline. I say that his statement seems to indicate this; for, in no spirit of discourtesy or detraction, I am compelled to add that, despite the stimulating character of his discussions, and the value of much of his material, in his chapters on “The Bible and Criticism,” “The Higher Criticism,” and “The Literary Study of the Bible,” there is an opulence of confused thinking, resulting in a sustained lack of discernment and discrimination in his use of technical terms that may well be a warning to all of us of lesser gifts and erudition.

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, vol. iii. p. 857, col. 2.

the two heads of Literary and Historical Criticism. I may further remark, in passing, that, as is quite the orthodox thing to do, Professor Gray confounds Literary with Historical Criticism. Finally, starting from the proposition that "The classifications of Biblical criticism arise not out of logical abstractions, but out of the demands made by the individualistic Biblical qualities,"<sup>1</sup> G. Heineci enumerates six "departments" of Biblical Criticism. These are Canonics, Textual, Historical, Linguistic, Stylistic, and what he calls "Re-constructive" Criticism.

All of the foregoing schemes — one as truly as another — bear their condemnation upon their very face. They all represent Biblical Criticism as a distinct species of Criticism. But if it be such, with what other species of Criticism is it coördinate? and what is its differentiating specific difference? They all — except Davidson's — treat Historical, Literary, Textual, and other branches of Criticism as subspecies of Biblical Criticism. This implies, however, that there is a distinct species of Historical Criticism called Biblical Historical Criticism, and different, let us say, from Shakespearean Historical Criticism or Ciceronian Historical Criticism. But such a notion is manifestly absurd. The problems of Textual, Historical, Literary, and all other branches of Criticism remain essentially the same, regardless of the writing in connection with which they emerge. Further, none of the proposed divisions of this so-called "science of Biblical Criticism" is based upon any discernible or defensible principle. All of them are products of the *sic volo* method, and as such purely arbitrary.

But it is to the practical rather than what may be considered the merely technical objections to current conceptions of Biblical Criticism that I desire to call attention. Not content with speaking of Textual, Historical, and Literary Criticism as "divisions" of Biblical Criticism, it is only too common to find our best scholars identifying "Biblical Criticism," as suits their convenience, sometimes with Literary, and some-

<sup>1</sup> New Schaff-Herzog Ency. of Religious Knowledge, vol. II., art. "Biblical Criticism."

times with Historical Criticism. Accordingly, when one hears "the claims of Criticism," or "the inevitableness and legitimacy of Criticism," asserted in connection with the Christian Scriptures, he actually has need to pause and remind himself that what is really meant is not the inevitableness and legitimacy of subjecting to stringent and impartial criticism the central and distinctive claim made for these writings, that is to say, their claim to biblicality, their claim to be "*the Bible*," their claim to be an inspired documentation of a special, direct, supernatural, divine revelation — not at all. What is meant — all that is meant! — is the inevitableness and legitimacy of subjecting to the test of impartial Historical Criticism the claims set up as to the origin and literary history of the several books of the Bible. I say "all that is meant" because, unfortunately, our very best writers, almost, if not quite, without exception, begin by confounding Literary with Historical Criticism. This is the "Biblical Criticism" the rights of which Dr. Briggs, for example, defends with no little heat in a considerable part of his chapter on "The Bible and Criticism."<sup>1</sup> This, along with Textual and Linguistic Criticism, is the "Criticism," "The Claims of Which Upon the Clergy and Laity," and "The Inevitableness and Legitimacy" of which Dean Kirkpatrick very persuasively argues for.<sup>2</sup> Of course I am not objecting to subjecting to the most rigorous criticism the claims made touching the origin and literary history of the books of the Bible — whether these claims be made by conservatives or by radicals. Inevitable! — of course the testing of these is inevitable. He would be a foolish man, indeed, who at this time of day fancied that he could prevent it. No really thoughtful man desires to prevent the application of Historical Criticism to these claims. There is nothing sacrosanct about the problem of origin in the case of the books of the Bible any more than there is about the problem of the origin of the writings ascribed to Thucydides. The real

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 94-104.

<sup>2</sup> *The Higher Criticism*, pp. 3-33.

objections to such discussions as those of Dr. Briggs and Dean Kirkpatrick are at least three. One is that they create the impression that there are responsible scholars who demur to the application of sound principles of Historical Criticism to the books of the Bible. Such, of course, is not the fact. Another and even graver objection is that such discussions create the impression that Historical Criticism is Biblical Criticism. But this, again, is not the fact. The problem of origin is in no sense a problem peculiar to the books of Scripture. And still less can it, with a due regard to the proprieties of speech, be called a *biblical* problem, that is to say, a phase of the problem of biblicality. But the gravest objection of all to thus identifying Historical with Biblical Criticism is that the effect of so doing is to distract attention from the fact of the inevitableness and legitimacy of what I have called Biblical Criticism Proper, that is to say, the inevitableness and legitimacy of fairly facing the problems that have emerged in connection with the alleged "fact of inspiration," the alleged "nature of inspiration," the alleged fact of "revelation," the alleged modes of "revelation," and of the documentation of this "revelation." Neither Textual, Historical, nor Literary Criticism—severally or jointly—is competent to solve any—except perhaps, and partially, the last—of these the really crucial problems regarding the books of the Bible. The most that the disciplines mentioned can do is to prepare the way before Biblical Criticism Proper. This they can do. But, having done this, they must step aside and leave the latter discipline free to deal with its own proper problem in its own characteristic way. Writers like Dr. Briggs and Dean Kirkpatrick simply deceive themselves, if they suppose that the rights of Criticism in connection with the Scriptures are sufficiently recognized when it is given a free hand to deal with the textual, fontal, and literary problems that arise in connection with its books. To confine Criticism to such problems is to debar or to divert it from the most fundamental problem presented by the books of the Bible;

namely, the problem of their biblicality; the question as to whether they are in reality what they claim to be, or are alleged to be, that is, an inspired documentation of a special divine revelation. This, and nothing but this, is the real problem of Biblical Criticism properly so called. To propose, with Dr. Briggs, to dispose of this problem by an appeal to the *Testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, or, with Dean Kirkpatrick, by invoking "the authority of Christ and the Apostles," may be plausible and have an appearance of piety, but, as I have attempted elsewhere<sup>1</sup> to show, it is futile.

Hand in glove with the defect in current conceptions of Biblical Criticism that has just engaged our attention goes another of an even less technical and a more serious kind. I refer to the fact that it is the common practice in current discussions of the subject to give to the adjective "Biblical" in the phrase Biblical Criticism the same sharply restricted denotation that originally attached to the term "Bible." That is to say, the pseudo-science of Biblical Criticism presently in vogue, is represented as concerned solely with "the Bible," or Christian Scriptures. This assertion calls for no proof. It is on the very face of the statements already cited. The scholars cited, from Davidson to Gray, in what they have to say of Biblical Criticism, obviously have in mind no other writings than the Christian Scriptures. They one and all ignore the fact that in usage the denotation of the term "Bible" has undergone a significant and revolutionary extension. From being used exclusively as a proper noun — the name for the Christian Scriptures — "bible" has now for a long time been used also as a common noun. The fact that it is so used reminds us forcibly that a claim to biblicality in every essential similar to that set up for the Christian Scriptures is also set up for other writings. Not only so, but, in the case of certain other so-called "sacred books," this claim is signaled in precisely the same way employed

<sup>1</sup> Princeton Theological Review, Oct. 1916, art. "A Discipline that calls for Recognition."

by Christians to signalize it in the case of the Old and the New Testament. Thus the Mohammedan speaks of his "sacred writings" as *Al Koran*, that is, "the Book," "the Bible." And the Mormon speaks of his as "The Book of Mormon," that is, "the Bible given through the prophet Mormon and his son Moroni." And yet, despite the fact that the use of the term "bible" as a common noun is a standing and outstanding challenge of the claim set up in the phrase "the Bible," our lexicons themselves have transferred to the adjective "biblical" the limited denotation of the term "Bible" when used as a proper noun. "Of or pertaining to the Bible; in harmony with the Bible," they define.<sup>1</sup> And our scholars with one accord treat the so-called "science of Biblical Criticism," with its divisions *de convenance*, as concerned exclusively with "the Bible."

This limitation of the denotation of the adjective "Biblical" is a matter of more moment than might at first glance appear. In current discussions of "Biblical Criticism," it has led to, or been accompanied by, a transfer of the limited connotation also of the term "Bible" to the adjective "Biblical." That such a transfer of connotation should in this instance have taken place is not, indeed, matter for surprise. It is merely an illustration of the power of what may be called vested spiritual interests to shape and control usage. Even our lexicons—presumably free from all theological bias—reflect the influence of this power. Thus "The Century Dictionary," even though it treats the term "bible" both as a proper and a common noun, transfers to the adjective "biblical" only the denotation and connotation of "Bible" as a proper noun. Thus it defines "Biblical":—

"1. Pertaining to the Bible, or the sacred writings: as *biblical* learning, *biblical* criticism. 2. In accordance with the teachings of the Bible. Hence 3. Authoritative, true."

The logic of the "hence" here is on its face. It implies that the validity of the claim to biblicality set up for the Christian Scriptures is *res adjudicata*. On any other sup-

<sup>1</sup> Standard Dict., *s.v.*; and substantially so the Cen. Dict.

position this "hence" would be an obvious *non sequitur*. And yet "The Century Dictionary" gives as one definition of "bible" "any writing or collection of religious writings regarded by its adherents as a divine revelation." For the adjective "biblical," however, it provides no corresponding denotation and connotation.<sup>1</sup> And that our scholars, both of "the right" and of "the center," as well as our dictionaries, have thus transferred the connotation of the noun "Bible" to the adjective "Biblical" is only too manifest. Dr. J. A. W. Haas, for example, after restricting the divisions of what he calls "Biblical Criticism" to Textual, Historical, and Literary Criticism, still deprecates what he speaks of as sweeping "the Bible into the full current of criticism." Indeed, it seems that he is willing to speak of even this non-biblical sort of "Biblical Criticism" in connection with the Bible only, "because we think it can be shown that the presuppositions that can be fairly held give the Bible a special place."<sup>2</sup> And what are these presuppositions? They are, so Dr. Haas holds, "the religious value of the Bible, its uniqueness, revelation and inspiration."<sup>3</sup> Here, then, Dr. Haas seriously maintains that when Criticism is dealing with the textual, historical, and literary problems presented by the Christian Scriptures, it must approach these problems, not as it would approach them in the case of any other book, but under the control of the presuppositions that he mentions. Similarly, we find so clear a thinker as the late Dr. William H. Green maintaining that "in applying the principles and methods of literary criticism to the books of the Bible, it must be borne in mind that these books have a character of their own as a revelation from God."<sup>4</sup> Evidently his position is identical with that of Dr. Haas. Nor is their position upon this subject different from that of such writers as

<sup>1</sup> The same is true in the case of The Standard Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Moses and the Prophets*, p. 18. By "literary criticism" here, as the context shows, Dr. Green really means Historical Criticism using historical data embedded in literary phenomena.

Drs. Driver, Kirkpatrick, and Briggs. "The Christian critic," says Dr. Driver, on this point speaking for Dean Kirkpatrick as well as for himself, "starts with the belief that the Bible contains a revelation from God, and that its writers are inspired."<sup>1</sup> And Dr. Briggs, contrasting "evangelical" with "rationalistic" critics, says that the former "set out by finding out what the biblical writings say about themselves," that is, about their authorship, place and time of composition, literary form, and the like, and adds:—

"Evangelical critics are satisfied with this. Rationalistic critics are not. . . . In the conflict of opinion, evangelical critics will waive their opinions as to the divine authority of this testimony, but in their own convictions, *critical work*, and teaching they will not waive them."<sup>2</sup>

The final outcome of thus permitting Textual, Historical, and Literary Criticism, and other non-biblical disciplines, to masquerade under the name of "Biblical Criticism," and of completing this usurpation by transferring both the denotation and the connotation of the noun "Bible" to the adjective "Biblical" is as obvious as it has been inevitable. The Biblicality of the Christian Scriptures has been quietly transformed from a *problem* into a *datum*, and all thought of a discipline of Biblical Criticism properly so-called, that is, a discipline formulated for the express purpose of dealing with the claim to biblicality in connection with whatever writings set up, and of dealing with it upon the basis of biblical data,—I say, all thought of such a discipline has simply dropped out of our minds.

Such, then, is Biblical Criticism as currently conceived. As a logical construction it violates alike the elementary principles of classification, and the obvious proprieties of nomenclature. It is a so-called "science" built upon no "architectonic principle" and destitute of unity. It presents us with so-called "divisions," but with no *dividuum*. One could with about as much propriety call a plow, a

<sup>1</sup> The Higher Criticism, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup> Biblical Study, p. 173 (*italics mine*).

harrow, and a hoe "divisions" of a garden, as call Historical, Literary, and Textual Criticism, or Canonics, Exegesis, and Archæology "divisions" of Biblical Criticism," when, as currently used, the latter term designates merely the field upon which these disciplines are for the time being employed. It is called "*Biblical Criticism*"; and yet it ignores all other "bibles" except the Christian Scriptures, and in their case it ignores the problem raised by their most distinctive claim, that is, the problem of biblicality; and, further, of various disciplines grouped under this name, not one is, properly speaking, a biblical discipline, that is to say, not one of them is concerned with the Bible qua *Bible*, but simply qua *book*, and, so far as these disciplines are concerned, in the same class with any and all other books. It is called *Biblical Criticism*, and yet more than one of the disciplines said to constitute its "divisions" or "departments" is not a critical discipline — for example, Canonics and Exegesis — and those that are critical disciplines are deprived of their critical character by the "presuppositions" under which only they are permitted to deal with their appropriate problems. Surely such a construction as this does little credit to biblical scholarship.

Not even our personal relation to the great and precious vested spiritual interests indirectly involved ought to be sufficient to blind us to the unhappy and untenable position to which current conceptions of Biblical Criticism commit Christian scholars. Imagine, for instance, a Mormon protesting — as well he might — against allowing his "bible" — for he also has a "bible" — to be swept "into the full current of" Historical Criticism. The only effect that such a protest would produce would be a knowing wink and a derisive smile. Indeed, if confronted with such a list of "phenomena" as Dean Kirkpatrick tells us<sup>1</sup> Historical Criticism has unearthed in the case of the Scriptures, I can easily believe that a really clear-visioned Mormon would think twice before risking his leader's credit

<sup>1</sup> Divine Library of the Old Testament, p. 88.

by saying calmly we accept "the inspiration" of the Book of Mormon on the authority of Joseph Smith. But suppose he was short-sighted enough to seek to break the force of such phenomena, and save his "bible" by placing the head of Joseph Smith between it and the axe, would that prevent the axe from falling? Imagine a Mohammedan, when it was proposed to apply Historical Criticism to the Koran, saying gravely: "There can be no objection whatever to such a procedure. But, in applying the principles and methods of Historical Criticism to the Suras of the Koran, it must be borne in mind that they have a character peculiarly their own, as a revelation from God; and a criticism which denies this at the outset, and conducts all of its investigations upon this presumption, is under a bias which must necessarily lead to false conclusions"! And if he did, who would fail to see that he was playing off Scylla against Charybdis, and that there would be no substantial gain in being engulfed by Scylla, in order to avoid being swallowed up in Charybdis; and that, on the contrary, our only real safety lay in avoiding both? Clearly if the denotation of the adjective "Biblical" in the term "Biblical Criticism" were extended so as to make the science so designated bring within its jurisdiction all "bibles," and not merely the Christian Bible, the obvious application of the familiar saw "What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander" would prevent us from losing ourselves in the bogs that "Biblical Criticism," as currently conceived, prepares for unwary feet.

But the position in which current notions of "Biblical Criticism" place Christian scholarship is not only untenable, it is compromising, and dangerous as well. Let us hear Dr. Haas. With a frankness that is as naïve as it is admirable, he tells us why he thinks the presuppositions that he has mentioned must be held, not "as laws," but only "as guiding and directive principles by which the investigation [meaning, of course, the results of the investigation] may be measured [that is, tested as to their correctness]. For [he argues] that cannot finally be cor-

rect [that is, those elements in the conclusions reached when Historical Criticism is applied to the Bible cannot be correct] which injures the religious worth of the Bible. This worth has been felt by experience. To neglect it injures faith not only in the elements beyond experience. Therefore [Dr. Haas goes on to add] these presuppositions are in line with what must be kept, limit criticism and prevent it from becoming doubt."<sup>1</sup>

It is hard to see how frankness could go farther without becoming self-conscious, and possibly embarrassed. Is it not compromising to maintain, or even to suggest, that in the case of the Christian Scriptures the only way to "prevent" Historical Criticism from "becoming doubt" is to place it under "guiding and directive principles," and so prevent it from being "criticism" in any proper sense? Some years back there was in the English Courts a *cause célèbre* in which the reputation and rank of an officer high in the army were at stake. Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, had himself indirectly an interest in the issue of the case, because he had been present, possibly had himself held a hand, in the game of *baccarat* during which the accused officer was said to have been guilty of cheating. When the case was called for trial, the Prince of Wales so far forgot the proprieties as to come into the courtroom and seat himself beside the presiding Justice. No sooner had he done so, however, than Sir William Clark, who was defending the accused officer, arose in his place and, addressing the Court, declined to proceed a step in the case until the Prince of Wales had left the courtroom. That this distinguished barrister should thus have risked alienating the royal favor, and ruining his personal prospects of future preferment, is the most striking evidence of what is demanded by proper judicial ideals. By it we are reminded forcibly that judicial decisions that are to command un-

<sup>1</sup> Biblical Criticism, p. 53. It is only fair to myself to say that the last two sentences — which, for some reason are evidently anacolouthic — have been correctly quoted. Though they are somewhat obscure as they stand, it is not difficult to see what is in Dr. Haas's mind.

qualified respect and confidence must themselves be above all suspicion of having been reached under any other influence whatever, except that of the evidence proper to the matter in hand. And what applies to judicial ideals applies, of course, with equal force, to critical ideals; the two terms being, in fact, but different names for the same thing.

Accordingly, if, in applying the principles and methods of Historical Criticism to the books of the Bible, we permit it to be even suspected that we are applying them under certain presuppositions—call them “laws,” or “guiding and directive principles,” or whatever else you please—with a view to preventing doubt of the validity of the claim that these books are “inspired” and “a revelation from God,” we may be sure that instead of preventing we shall awaken doubt. How can it be otherwise? If the Bible has nothing to fear from a free and untrammelled Historical Criticism—that is, of course, an Historical Criticism untrammelled not only by theological but also by philosophical and rationalistic presuppositions—then why invoke presuppositions in its case that would be generally scouted in the case of any other alleged “bible”? Instead, therefore, of protesting against sweeping “the Bible into the general current of Criticism,” what scholars of “the right” should do is to protest against palming off on Historical Criticism conclusions that bear upon their face the evidence that they have been reached under the influence of an anti-supernaturalistic bias or under that of an evolutionary philosophy. For obviously Criticism may be as effectually denatured by being conducted under the bias of anti-supernaturalism or of an evolutionary philosophy, as under presuppositions such as those proposed by Drs. Haas and Green, and seconded by Drs. Briggs, Driver, and Kirkpatrick—for they are all in this respect in the same boat, the differences between them being one of merely more or less cautious statement.

But the position in which current conceptions of Biblical Criticism place Christian scholars is not only compromising, it is dangerous. Whatever the wounds from

which confidence in the biblicality of the Christian Scriptures may be suffering to-day — and frankness compels the admission that these are neither few nor slight — they have been inflicted in the house of its friends. They are due to the fact that scholars of “the center” have lulled themselves, and a great multitude of those that look to them for light and leading, into a totally and disastrously false security. This they have done by repeating ceaselessly such formulas as “The Christian critic starts with the belief that the Bible contains a revelation from God, and that its writers are inspired,” and “we accept the Bible ‘as the inspired authoritative record of God’s revelation of Himself . . . on the authority of Christ and His Apostles,’” and the like; and at the same time accepting and passing on to the general public, in the name of scientific Historical Criticism, conclusions — reached, let me say in passing, in the use or misuse of a so-called Historical Criticism that has demonstrably been dominated either by an anti-supernaturalistic bias or an evolutionary philosophy — of a kind that would damn out of hand, as we say, nay, conclusions of the very same kind that have irretrievably damned the claims of such “bibles” as the Koran and the Book of Mormon. What more natural, then, or rather what more inevitable, than that confidence in the biblicality of the Christian Scriptures should have been damaged, despite the use of the magic formulas supposed to render it invulnerable? For though we may thrust Biblical Criticism Proper out of the front door, we may be sure that it will enter again at the rear. It not only cannot be gotten rid of, but — and this is the point that has been overlooked — its verdicts will be, and must be, according to the best *available evidence*. It is not for Biblical Criticism to sit upon the conclusions of Historical Criticism. Those conclusions — right or wrong — it must accept from Historical Criticism. It is incompetent to review them. Its sole concern is to determine the significance of the findings of Historical Criticism — whatever those findings may be — for the alleged biblicality of the writing

whose claim is under examination. Or, to present the same facts in another form, we shall do well to remind ourselves that questions of Historical Criticism must be thrashed out to a finish in the forum and under the rules of Historical Criticism, and that the conclusions there finally and fairly reached must be accepted whatever their bearing upon the claim to biblicality set up for any book — regardless of whether it be the Christian Bible or the Book of Mormon. And the sooner all concerned — those both of “the right” and of “the center” — face the facts here, the better will it be for all concerned. This is no time for what a prophet of the eighth century would have called “refuges of lies.”

One feature of the situation created by current notions of Biblical Criticism too important to be passed over yet remains to be mentioned. Even at this late date, then, Christian scholarship finds itself without a treatise specifically devoted to a careful formulation of the principles and methods of what I have called Biblical Criticism Proper. We have, of course, a valuable literature on “The Evidences,” “Apologetics,” and on that branch of Lower Historical Criticism designated by Langlois and Seignobos “Critical Investigation of Authorship,” and by others more briefly “Analytical Criticism.”<sup>1</sup> But while from all these disciplines there may be had valuable suggestions and helps for the formulation of a science of Biblical Criticism Proper, it is obvious that none, nor all of them combined, can supply its place. The nearest approach to a treatise such as the exigencies of the case urgently call for is the late Dr. Willis J. Beecher’s “Reasonable Biblical Criticism.” But, valuable as is Dr. Beecher’s discussion, it neither is nor professes to be a formulation of a science of Biblical Criticism. What the situation calls for is a treatise that will precise the major issue raised by the

<sup>1</sup> Since the days of Eichhorn this important discipline has quite commonly, though not universally, been known among biblical scholars as “The Higher Criticism” — or at least as a major part of the nondescript discipline unfortunately so designated.

claim to biblicality; disentangle the several subordinate issues upon a solution of which the solution of the main issue will hinge; indicate the relation between Biblical Criticism Proper and such disciplines as Historical, Literary, and Textual Criticism, and also between it and Interpretation and Archæology, all of which together constitute its necessary propædeutic, but nothing more; and which will also indicate the relation between Biblical Criticism Proper and such disciplines as "The Evidences" and "Apologetics"—which, of course, are dependent upon it for whatever is really valuable in their material and their results; and—not to go into further detail—which will state and justify the principles and methods that must be employed if the problem of biblicality is to be adequately and effectively dealt with. If such a treatise exists to-day, it has not been my good fortune to have run across it myself or to have had my attention directed to it. Clearly current conceptions of Biblical Criticism are largely responsible for the lack of it.

It only remains to forestall, if I can, what some may regard as a short but sufficient answer to the foregoing strictures. Usage, it will be said, is sovereign; and, further, that in this particular instance the usage objected to is not only of too long standing and too firmly established, but too obviously convenient, not to say in certain respects too obviously proper and even necessary, to be discarded and replaced by another at this late date. Certainly, such an answer is short enough; but is it really sufficient—sufficient, that is, if the strictures made above are really well-grounded? Can we absolve ourselves from responsibility for perpetuating the evils inherent in so mischievous a usage by a mere plaintive appeal to the so-called "sovereignty of usage"? The reply to such an appeal is as obvious as it is conclusive. The day of autocracies—that of usage included—is past. The only sovereignties that can wisely and safely be recognized are Truth and Right. Further, usage is our creature and servant, not our sovereign and our master. Not only so, but from of old, usu-

ally after much long-suffering, bad usage, like other bad sovereigns, has been ousted, and made to give place to a usage more amenable to reason and the facts, and so more safe. Why, then, should it be deemed impossible to rectify the vicious usage that we have been considering? Surely it would seem to be easy enough to cease confusing Biblical Criticism as the name of a particular field of Criticism, with Biblical Criticism Proper as the name of a specific branch of Criticism; to cease speaking of Textual, Literary, and Historical Criticism — not to mention other disciplines, some of which are not even critical disciplines — as branches of Biblical Criticism; to substitute for the current restricted denotation of the adjective “biblical” a more extended denotation — a denotation that on its face would show that Biblical Criticism, whether used as the name of a field of Criticism, or as that of a branch of Criticism included not only the Christian Scriptures, but all books alleged to be “bibles”; and for the present restricted connotation of this adjective — according to which it means “of or pertaining to the Bible,” or Christian Scriptures, to substitute the wider connotation “of or pertaining to biblicality.” Nor should it be difficult when thinking of Biblical Criticism as a specific critical discipline to think of it as that branch of Criticism that concerns itself exclusively with biblical data, that is, with data evidencing or alleged to evidence biblicality; and whose specific function it is to test the validity of the claim to biblicality for whatever writing set up.