

guesses. A true higher criticism is a proper study and it is very foolish for us to inveigh against it, but when we think of the higher criticism of the Bible we are speaking of a certain type of higher criticism which has gone in a certain direction, with many scholars participating, and has followed a certain general attitude. That is what we generally mean when we speak of the higher criticism of the Bible. Its key-stone was the higher criticism of the Pentateuch. There is no harm in the world in asking the questions, "Did Abraham write the story of Abraham in Palestine, did God reveal it to Moses? or was it passed down and Moses took it over?" There is no harm in such a study, but there is great harm if you try to insist on results for which there is no evidence. When we speak of the higher criticism of the Pentateuch, we do not mean just an attempt to try to learn these things or to see what the evidence is at the various points. We mean a certain movement of study which has reached certain conclusions and taken a certain position, which has become very widespread. There may be great difference of details among those who hold this position, but there are certain things in common sufficient to entitle us to consider it as one movement. It has had disastrous effects upon the history of the Church as a whole and so we are interested in knowing just what the movement was. You might say that if Franklin Pierce, the second president of the United States before Abraham Lincoln, had never been seen to have drunk out of a bottle when he was a boy, but had always used a bottle with a nipple and had never started drinking out of a glass, then it is entirely probable that he never would have died a drunkard's death. Perhaps the first step in his heading for a drunkard's grave was his beginning to drink out of a glass instead of through a nipple. Perhaps this was so, but there are many other steps which went into it. There was a certain point where the line was heading him almost inevitably toward the course which he struck, but you cannot say off-hand where that point is. You have to study the details and examine them.

It is very easy to say to little children and to young people that the Bible is absolutely true and that anybody who thinks the contrary is a numbskull and an idiot. You can ridicule evolution and you can ridicule higher criticism. You can pick out certain aspects of it and make it sound utterly idiotic and many people will accept what you say.