

understandings, ambitions, etc., with the illumination of the Spirit. Probably it is best to make claims very slowly, if at all. It is no doubt better to represent ourselves as learners and to await the ultimate truth in a world more perfect than ours now is.

6. Criticism

In formal circles, criticism is the science of subjecting presentations to formal reasoning for evaluation and credibility. This definition, a key one for progress in this course, allows us to see that:

--true criticism is neutral (essentially)

--it evaluates and renders a decision either by force of expression or force of neglect. The character of the decision is the product of the reasoned analysis.

--it is inevitable since the "reasonable soul" of man cannot stop making evaluations and these become the cornerstones of criticism, and, in time, progress.

The particular levels of criticism in which we are involved are known as higher and lower. Higher criticism is the matter of authenticity, integrity, canonicity, etc. It is occupied with the "how", "when", and "why" of the Biblical books. There is a destructive form which begins with the assumption that the Biblical books are not what they claim to be and there is a constructive form that begins with the Biblical statements and tests them for adequacy. A starting point, like a basic philosophy, is not proved...it is asserted and either accepted or rejected.

Lower criticism is the matter of the study of the text and its transmission. It is concerned with the accuracy of the same and the correctness of the tradition behind it but it is more a matter of "what are the words?"

These forms of criticism are common to all language study and all work with ancient manuscripts and the Bible student should not become "up tight" with their application to Biblical studies.

We do urge one note of caution. The term "criticism" is not well understood. It evokes sharp emotions. Everyone who reads the Bible in a meaningful way is something of a critic. But do not announce from your pulpit that you are a "Bible-critic" for most people do not know that criticism is neutral when true. They will assume the worst for you and if you have not learned better than