

Active Neology

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A journal of the day sent me gives the Dean of Westminster's theory of inspiration, which is really a denial of God in it. Scientific discovery [?] is assumed to have revealed facts plainly inconsistent with Genesis taken literally, and to cast Christians on Origen's mischievous allegorising. The Dean is one of those who do not go as to miracles all the lengths of many Germans, Dutch, and Americans, to say nothing of some Britons. He talks of the vast difference between the historical evidence for our Lord's miracles, and that for many of the O.T. miracles. But such a defence cannot long resist the dead weight of unbelief. Evidence of sense was enough to render inexcusable those who saw; but it is slight compared with God's testimony in Scripture. If men did believe on evidence only, the Lord did not believe in them (John 2: 24, 25). Man must be born anew for God's Kingdom; and this is of the Holy Ghost through faith, greater than any miracles, which are a sign to unbelievers, but have *per se* no power to bring sinners to God. Modern scientists, who dare to assail scripture will have to mend their hypotheses as well as their exegesis; in fact they are scarce better than heathen philosophers. But think of the folly and the sin of professed Christian teachers being influenced by speculative anthropologists, astronomers, biologists, geologists, against God's written word! Ascertained facts are very distinct from human theories, and have never been proved to clash with Holy Writ, ardently desired as this issue has been by some.

As to the Dean's principles, they are not of faith and cannot please God, any more than secure the truth to man. "Biblical criticism proper" is the reducing of the current text, injured by human copying and also by editorial guesswork, to the very words of the Holy Spirit as originally written. But neo-criticism is essentially infidel; because it consists of man's mind sitting in judgment on what no Christian can reasonably doubt to be the deposit for faith through the inspired writers. What he calls "the science of literary and historical investigation," or the self-styled "higher criticism," is unbelieving, illegitimate, and spurious, certainly as applied to Scripture, and uncertain for any other ancient book, such as Homer for instance, in the hands of even a first-rate scholar like Karl Lachmann.

The church of God did *not* take its stand on any such humanitarian ground, but persevered in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread and the prayers. Christians accepted without question, as our Lord taught them, the written word as authoritative and beyond controversy. It was after the departure of the apostles and prophets (the foundation on which the house of God stands), that wicked men and impostors came out more openly, as the "apostles warned, to push their school of doubt and incredulity, with all the evils in its train. "I know (said not the least) that after my departure will come among you grievous wolves, not sparing the flock. And from your own selves will rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20: 29, 30). The Christian student, nay the highest teacher, is not called to any such investigation as judging the scriptures, but to judge himself and others, and even what assumes to be the church, by the scriptures. Indeed it became a necessary question to judge *which* is the church, from the time that it openly split into bodies holding no intercommunion, aggravated since the Reformation by the gradual swarm of rival societies claiming to be churches. Thus, only one can be according to scriptural truth; and if this one had just grounds, it would surely take the place, not of boast, but of humiliation and grief that things had come to such a pass, where, once was blessed unity.

If we turn, as the Dean did, from the abstract to concrete facts, his statements are equally shallow, unintelligent, and unfounded; as is the case with all rationalists, even of experts in Hebrew and Greek;

which learning has little or nothing to do with their novel criticism. The command to Noah of one pair of animals is contrasted with another to take seven pairs of the clean: the first as by God's command; the second as Jehovah's, with corresponding differences in each case. "In this way we discover that two early accounts! written by writers of a different style!! have been welded together by the final author of the Book of Genesis!!!"

So this is his first sample of the revolutionary criticism, of "the science of literary and historical investigation!" It is a mere dream of imagination playing on the surface of facts and words, without the least understanding of the truth which the Divine Author was giving through its writer. *Elohim* is "God" in His sovereign dealing, as of creation. *Jehovah* is "the LORD," in His unfolding special relationship. Is not this incontestably true in both respects? Let then men search the Scripture and believe as they ought; or, if they venture to deny it, proclaim their wilful ignorance. For this explains the case to the honour of God, the unity of the writer, and the profit of the reader. And the difference of the names is not only accurate but indispensable without a circumlocution beneath a revelation. This too gives occasion to the beautiful differences which accompany divine wisdom. How absurd to conceive that "writers of a different style" are required, "welded together by the final author!" Yet the Dean is modest in imagining only three; for even Dr. Driver exceeds, and he is far from keeping pace with his German leaders in their crusade against this Holy Scripture as given through Moses, if we truly own the Lord Jesus. Take one verse (Gen. 7: 16) to squash the bubble: "As God commanded him; and the LORD shut him in." Two writers! because as "Elohim" care of male and female animals is expressed, while the special concern as "Jehovah" appears to shut Noah in. And the third tacked the two into his patch-work without a single ray of light, and not even an idea! What a whimsical scheme!

The same principle applies still more manifestly to Gen. 1 - 2: 3 as compared with Gen. 2: 4-25. Let us consider it. The chapters are not two differing accounts, but two aspects of the same revelation; as to which historical investigation, no less than science, or this new and absurd pretension to "the science of literary and historical investigation," claims new light beyond our Lord and His apostles. Now chap. 2 has no reference to creation save in ver. 4, the transition link with the relations established among His creatures by Him, who therefore is spoken of accurately and necessarily, not as Elohim, but Jehovah Elohim. Accordingly we have none of the general details of creation, so minutely given in chap. 1, but new matter in chap. 2 of what bears on man for special relationship, morally rather than as head of creation. Here only we learn that Jehovah Elohim formed man of dust of the ground like other animals, but, unlike any, breathed into *his* nostrils the breath of life. Others had the breath of life by creative will physically; man alone by Jehovah Elohim's inbreathing, the cause of his soul's immortality (for good or for ill unspeakable), whilst life perished for others with their bodies. He only of earth has direct moral responsibility, and must in resurrection give account to God, as other scriptures prove.

Therefore it is that chap. 2, not chap. 1, tells us of the garden or park which Jehovah planted in Eden, where He put the man He had formed, not only stocked with beauty and beneficence for the being in relationship with Himself, but having in its midst the tree with peculiar privilege, and another tree to test his obedience, the first man's responsibility. All this was not, nor could be, in chap. 1, but properly and only where Jehovah Elohim gave the keynote; not the creator God as such, but also the personal name, the moral Governor who in due time revealed it in His covenant with Israel: a fact of the profoundest interest and import to the only nation as such brought into relationship with Him of old as their God, the sole living and true God.

Without pretending to explain every other detail, we may all discern that only to chap. 2 falls the beautiful moral ground on which Jehovah Elohim acted in making him a helpmeet, his counterpart, separately and subsequently out of himself, after allowing man the remarkable title to give each living

soul of the lower creation its name, as pertaining to their sovereign: a striking refutation of another Dean's ridiculous and unbelieving dream that man learnt to talk gradually from the chirpings of birds and the cries of beasts. But woman alone was built by Jehovah Elohim out of man's rib for their special relationship, and therefore appropriately recorded here, and not in chap. 1. Does not this commend itself to every purged conscience and true heart? Does not the bearing of the chapter, and especially when both are compared, convict not of error alone but of sceptical sin those carried away by the scheme of Elohist and Jehovistic fragments and one knows not how many more redactors German ingenuity feels it necessary to invent in order to eke out these idle unmeaning dreams? Let the self-applauding "higher critics" remember that they too must give account to the Lord of glory, Who with His apostles and prophets vouches for the Bible's authority, as well as its genuineness and authenticity.

The fatuous and unspiritual hypothesis of Astruc yields nothing but Dead Sea fruit or even worse. The respective distinction of God's creation, and of the relationships laid down by Jehovah, is of great interest and importance, quite sacrificed by these would-be sages, who leave out God as the author, and deny Moses as His instrument.

What might help to show the untenableness of the theory is that the same distinction pervades all Scripture. Take the Psalms, where none of their fragments can apply: the difference of Elohim and Jehovah is conspicuous there throughout (and marked particularly in the first and second books); as expressive of what we have seen in Genesis, as exclusive of what the neologians say. Take again Jonah as a clear example of the same truth as against the fancies of these unconscionable critics, if critics they deserve to be called; for they really are free-thinkers.

The N.T. in its own blessed way presents the corresponding difference in "God" and "Father;" for this last, and not Jehovah, expresses the Christian relationship. Compare John 4: 21-24; as indeed it is true and plain from the Gospel of Matthew to the end of Revelation in its own peculiar way.

The function of a sound and Christian critic is to detect and cast out every slip, or what is worse, any quasi-correction, which crept into the original text through the copyists. In the O.T. this is chiefly in names and dates. In the N.T. are more serious additions, as in Acts 8: 37, Acts 9: 3, 4 (from elsewhere only), 1 John 5: 7, 8; and omissions, as in 1 Cor. 9: 20, 1 John 2: 23. But though these and the like have their importance, especially for those jealous for God's word to the minutest degree, as believing in its plenary inspiration, they affect most slightly the reliable and blessed testimony of God in the Scriptures. And the most ample grounds are in general extant to convince any upright mind, whatever may be the case. True criticism goes on the ground of faith in God's authoritative and certain written testimony to man; the soi-disant "higher" believes in no inspired deposit in the Pentateuch, etc., in the Psalms, or in the Prophets, according to the measure of their incredulity. And this ungodliness cannot stop there, but will at length undermine the N.T., Christianity, and Christ Himself for themselves and their admirers. W. K.