

THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD AS TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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In these days of higher criticism, feverish utterances, and endless controversies as to the mystery of life and religion, it is refreshing to read the clear and calm words that come from the pen of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol in the *Expository Times*.

The learned writer, in dealing with the difficulties which modern criticism raises as to the genuineness of the Mosaic writings, centres his attention in this paper more especially on the two precepts of the law concerning the law of the Sabbath and the enactment relative to divorce: and points out that, in considering carefully our Lord's teaching as regards these, some considerable light be thrown upon the difficult questions, which "the so-called Higher Criticism has forced upon our consideration." Whatever the inferences may be that are drawn from our Lord's words, as given in St. John vii. 22, as to questions connected with the Sabbath, there can be no doubt in any reasonable mind that He does in this passage set His seal on the reality of patriarchal history.

Passing on to consider our Lord's answers to the questions put to him relative to divorce, the writer asks very pointedly, "Whence do these words, thus deliberately cited and returned in answer to a formal and momentous question, come?" As we well know, from the first and second chapters of Genesis; or, in other words, from a portion of that ancient book which we are now invited to consider as a mythical portion, a portion in which, to use the words of a recent writer, "we cannot distinguish the historical germ, although we do not at all deny that it exists." Well may the Bishop add: "Is it too much to say that to derive from a source in which the historical is indistinguishable the answer of Christ to such a question as that which was put to Him, is to many minds inconceivable?" To this conclusion, indeed, no one can demur; to imagine that our Lord, who was "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," would quote from writings that owed their authority over those whom He was speaking to the fact that Moses was the compiler, when such compilation was mythical or debatable, would be to most minds, we venture to think, not only inconceivable, but absolutely abhorrent.

After pointing out the frequent reference of our blessed Lord to the person and authority of Moses, and demonstrating the difference between the Moses of the Gospels and the Moses of the analytical school of thought, the venerable writer makes use of these significant words:—

The break to which we have come in connection with the history of Moses between the analytical view and the testimony of the Gospels must be pronounced to be complete. We have seen in a former address that the observation of the work of Moses as a legislator and as the founder of an organized religion formed an argument of some validity against the analytical view. We now see what would be a still stronger argument; the Moses of the analytical view cannot be harmonized with the Moses of Christ. All this is very monitory. It places very clearly before us the real spiritual peril of being led away by the plausibilities and cleverness of modern criticism, and it seems to tell us very plainly that if we are so led away we must be prepared to re-construct our Credenda.

Those words of warning, coming as they do from one who is himself a past-master in Biblical criticism, are sufficiently weighty to cause

the followers of the higher critical school to pause before stating as final verities what it may be afterwards necessary for them to modify. Nor does this warning come a moment too soon. The harm that is being done by those holding positions of authority as authorized teachers in our own Church tearing up the very foundations on which not merely the doctrines of their Church, but the very truth of Christianity itself is founded, is so great and far-reaching in its consequences that unless those holding the responsible position of the writer of this paper under consideration speak out with no doubtful voice, men and women may well ask themselves the question, "What then, shall we believe?" Many lives at the present time are being clouded, many deathbeds are being robbed of the "peace that passeth understanding," by the assumptions of higher criticism. It is time that our spiritual leaders were up and doing; it is time that those who are making use of their residence under the roof of the Christian Church to knock down its walls were shown the door, and not allowed to enjoy the emoluments, the status, and the advantages which their position gives them while they are undermining the rock on which the citadel of that Church rests.

With something almost of an apology, Bishop Ellicott concludes his interesting and powerful because temperate consideration of a subject that is second to none in importance, by noticing a point on which, as he says, all adherents of the analytical view, the moderate as well as the extreme, are cordially united. Indeed, he seems to think it is somewhat presumptuous to propose to re-discuss a matter which, he says, all intelligent critics claim to have conclusively settled, and that is, that the book of Deuteronomy was never written by Moses.

To some, indeed, it may come as a surprise that there should be a consensus of opinion that a book which has been held by the tradition of the Jewish and of the Christian Church to be the work of the great law-giver should be a production of the time of Manasseh or Josiah and by a writer whose name is lost in oblivion. It is, therefore, somewhat of a relief to find that, whatever the unanimity of the moderate and extreme critical school may be in denying that Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, Bishop Ellicott by no means shares it. On the contrary, he brings forward several strong arguments in favor of the traditional view, and points out that our Lord on three separate occasions so referred to the book of Deuteronomy as to make it morally improbable that the book could have been so referred to if it had been written, not by Moses, but by one who impersonated him and wrote in his name.

Most sincerely do we echo the writer's conclusion that "the last word has certainly not yet been spoken on a subject which modern criticism somewhat precipitately claims to have now settled beyond the possibilities of controversy." If, indeed, the system of cutting out and patching in which seems part of the work of the analytical school is carried much further, we may easily imagine some aspirant for academic honours in the near future replying to the question, "Why are certain portions of the Scripture called the Mosaic writings?" with the answer, "Because they are composed of several minute and different fragments, and therefore resemble mosaic work."

The thought arises in our mind, Are we to allow ourselves to be carried away by the pride of intellect, and allow ourselves to make shipwreck of the faith that has been handed down to us through so many generations of faithful hearts, or shall we continue to hold fast the Faith once delivered to the saints? for, even expressed as tenderly and as carefully as the writer of this paper expresses it, the issue seems to be narrowed down to this: Are we to accept the teaching of the so-called Higher School of Criticism, or are we to accept the

traditional view which certainly and admittedly may equitably claim the *imprimatur* of our Lord's support? In face of the gravity of the situation, we may conclude this notice of Bishop Ellicott's admirable paper by quoting his own solemn words:

Are not all these things full of suggestion and full also of monitory significance? If the testimony of Christ is what it has appeared to be, then the likelihood of offence being given by a criticism that has to maintain itself by attenuating the real knowledge of Christ has become perilously great, and His own words come solemnly home to us: "It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."—*Religious Review of Reviews for April*.

OUR SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

The following extract from the Bishop of Algoma's charge at the 3rd Triennial Council of his dioceses has much wider application than to his own jurisdiction. His words may well be carefully weighed by clergy and laity of every diocese in Canada; and other diocesans have we fear like cause for anxiety as the Bishop of Algoma, in regard to S. S. work. Dr. Sullivan says:

"Our Diocesan Sunday School work caused me grave anxiety, not so much for the present as for the future of the Church through all this vast territory. Estimated by the issues depending upon it, its importance cannot be exaggerated. If the child be father to the man, so surely is the Sunday School of the day the mother and nursery of the Church for all coming generations. If the Churchmanship of the future is to be intelligent, scriptural, conservative, and instructed on sound Prayer Book lines, then it is in the Sunday School its foundations are to be laid. I am fully aware of the difficulties to be encountered—the absence of the clergyman, occupied, as he is, with multiplied and widely-scattered services; scanty lay co-operation, and, even where it does exist, too often teachers needing that one teach them again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; the wide dispersion of the children over large areas; the lack of proper appliances often, such as libraries and lesson papers; the strong and, to parents sometimes no less than to children, irresistible attraction of denominational Sunday Schools—all these things are "against us"; but just so much more is it impressed on my mind that if the numerical and moral strength of the Church is to be maintained; nay, if her very existence is to be perpetuated in our midst, then must the clergy make the instruction of the children an *educational specialty*, not indeed by the abolition of the present system of instruction, defective though it be, but rather by supplementing it through the good old-fashioned Prayer Book catechetical method which makes the case of the young an integral factor in the Church's public ministrations. This, brethren is one of your bounden duties, as the authorized representatives and mouthpieces of the "Ecclesia docens:" and its faithful, systematic discharge will bear manifold fruit. The children of the Church will receive *bona fide* religious instruction, such as they now fail to receive either in the common school, or, alas, in the majority of instances, in their own homes; her adults, as they listen, fresh confirmation in their faith; her service, new interest and attractiveness; and her ministers, added and most practical evidence of their claims as successors to those on whom the Head of the Church imposed that solemn parting injunction, "Feed my lambs."

I regret that I have to add that I cannot regard our Sunday School statistics as satisfactory or creditable, even taking into account the