

The folly of arguing from the words of Scripture against the conclusions of astronomy, geology or biology ought to be too well understood now to have it repeated in matters of literary criticism. In view of Christ's own free use of fiction in His numerous parables, we must admit the possibility of fiction in the make-up of Old Testament literature as well, and the determination of the question as to whether the Book of Jonah is so or not must be left to the kind of arguments proper for a literary discussion. My own mind inclines to the historical view of the book, though I confess not without some hesitation. But I find myself unable to base this conclusion with any confidence upon the words of Christ. The canonical epistle of Jude refers, for purpose of illustration, to what all admit were only current traditional fictions, without vouching for their historical truth. Christ was morally at liberty to do the same if He chose without further responsibility.

This point not unnaturally leads to a few remarks on a matter with which this paper may fitly close, viz., the attitude of the evangelical theologian to the methods of the Higher Criticism. With many it has become a sort of fixed principle that the whole subject is simply a product of rationalizing scepticism, which cannot be too severely reprobated and denounced, that it is a device of unbelieving men to undermine the authority of the Bible, with which no one who values the Gospel can have any possible sympathy. Some color has been lent to this contention, and some justification afforded for this attitude, by the fact that some of those who have been prominent as Biblical critics have been unbelieving men, and that their conclusions have sometimes been appealed to by enemies of the Gospel for the purpose of discrediting its claims. But the same has been true of every new science brought to birth in modern times. The Copernican astronomy threw the orthodox church into a panic, and its advocates had to run the gauntlet of the Inquisition. Many still living can remember how geology was denounced as a foe of religion, and how Darwin's "Origin of Species" was regarded as the chief infidel