

The Higher Criticism in Australia.

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The address of the Rev. G. Molnes to the General Assembly in New South Wales, should not be allowed to pass altogether unchallenged. It is of too serious a character and too dangerous a tendency to be regarded with indifference. It aims at the subversion of the very foundation of our faith, and should therefore be met with, at least, an earnest and decided protest, if for no other purpose, to show that we in Canada are not yet so far gone in the down grade as to sympathize in the smallest measure with the views which as the offspring of destructive criticism and wild liberalism it seeks to promulgate. Abandoning the ways in which our fathers trod, and wielding weapons forged in the workshops of German Rationalism, the graduates in the Higher Criticism School of Divines, to which the author of the address evidently belongs, are employed in the unhallowed task of endeavoring to effect the overthrow of most of all in religion that our beloved Church has hitherto held dear, in marvellous self complacency regarding themselves all the while as the happy inaugurators of an era of reform "the most momentous and the most fraught with promise that has ever taken place in the history of the Christian Church." As Christian scholars they have succeeded in effecting the introduction of such an era, and it behoves the people to hail its advent with shouts of welcome. The Bible must go by the wall. It is an old book, venerable for its years, and in many respects truthful; yet it is full of contradictions and inconsistencies, and can, therefore, no longer be regarded as the Word of God. The faith in which our fathers trusted, and which they found to be the rock of their strength and the source of their peace in their Heavenward journey, must be ruthlessly laid aside. The Creeds and Confessions of Faith which they were foolishly at pains to construct must be levelled in the dust and scattered to the four winds of Heaven. All that will be really necessary hereafter will be faith in the "Self-evidencing" Christ, not in Him as at once Prophet, Priest and King, not in Him as the God, the Kinsman redeemer, who offered Himself unto God as a propitiation for our sins, who died for us that we might live, but in His flawless character, His perfect life, His stainless soul, His glorious personality as the Son of Man and the Son of God, His revelation of the Father, who, as He manifests Him, far from demanding the punishment of the guilty, is ready to receive all men into His bosom, still cherishing towards them as He does the affection of a father, for they are indeed His sons "disobedient, it is true, yet capable of being reconciled to Him." This "Self-evidencing Christ" has hitherto been unseen of men. "Strange it is that Christ has been hidden from men during all the ages of the Church, and is hidden still. It is a marvel to think that Christian men, Fathers and Reformers, orthodox theologians and evangelical churches, have been and are humble followers of the Scribes and Pharisees whom Christ denounced and renounced—the very Scribes and Pharisees who crucified the Son of God." In reading such sentences as these one is strongly tempted to ask whether the man who spoke them be not the victim of a religious craze that has torn his mind from its moorings out and out. At best they can only be regarded as the wild vagaries of an intellect that the genius of scepticism has thoroughly perverted. What Christ hid during all the ages till now! The myriads in all past ages "who looked to Him and were lightened, and their faces shall never be clouded;" the Martyrs in countless hosts who counted not their life dear to them, but died rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name—Christ hid to all these! Impossible! They all saw Him—saw Him as clearly and trusted in Him as confidently as it is possible for mortal man to see Him and to trust in Him on this side the grave. They saw Him as He was revealed to them in their Bible, they saw Him as He was revealed to them in the faith that led them to accept Him as their Saviour, when the veil that was upon their hearts and concealed Him from their view was torn away by the Holy Spirit given unto them, and they see Him still, but with far clearer vision, face to face and without a cloud between.

In looking into the history of the Israelites from the Exodus down till the captivity, I have often wondered greatly at the readiness with which, abandoning the worship of the God of their fathers, they lapsed, every now and again, into idolatry. If, taught by the punishment, often terrible, that their great and marvelous estrangement provoked, they retraced their steps and returned to their allegiance, it was only to go back again in a short time to their former ways. And yet, our own times furnish material, ample material too, for astonishment still more affecting. In spite of all the evidence, often clear and convincing as mathematical demonstration, that our Bible is throughout the written Word of God, in spite of the accumulated evidence to this effect that modern research has placed within our reach, especially in spite of all the evidence that Assyrian and Egyptian Archaeology in these latter days has brought to bear on the subject; men, even men charged with the duty of telling us what it is that the Scriptures teach, and of defending the Scriptures against all assailants, are, ever and anon, bursting on our horizon like startling apparitions, and, in open violation of their solemn engagements, betraying their sacred trust, and abetting the cause of infidelity by surrendering our chiefest stronghold into the hands of the enemy. Gentlemen of this stamp seem now to be crowding in upon us in increasing numbers. They are not agreed among themselves, it is true, but they all seem to be animated by an unhallowed and unwarranted determination to thrust the Bible aside as the inspired Word of God. At most, they accept only those portions of it that relate to faith and life—those portions of it that their own inner consciousness is ready to

accept—as Divine in their origin. In coming to this determination they are moved, not by any fresh and startling discoveries that they themselves, in their pre-eminent scholarship and learned research, have succeeded in making; but rather by considerations that have been urged by open and avowed infidelity from the days of Julian the Apostate down to our own times. Wielding weapons, mainly drawn from such a questionable source, they hew the Bible in pieces like Agag. It is quite in keeping with the fitness of things that they should employ such weapons, for the precursor of the school of critics to which they belong was Spinoza, the Pantheistic Jewish Apostate. Without desiring to impugn in any measure their high scholarship, their superior Biblical culture, I have no hesitation in affirming that men as great and eminent in Christian scholarship as the most learned, the ablest and the best among them, have been firm believers even in the *Verbal* Inspiration of the Scripture. I may only mention such names as those of Robert Stephen, Mill, Bentley, the great Bergel, Beza, Lachmann, Tregelles, Scrivener, Burgon, Tischendorf. Nor should I omit to refer here to the names of the eminent men who but recently spent ten and a half years in the revision of the old authorised version of the Scriptures, and who, with numerous manuscripts in their hands, that have been discovered since the former version was made, have given us the old God-breathed Bible that we had, almost in its entirety, making certain alterations, it is true, yet not one, even one alteration that tends in the slightest degree to shake the foundation on which rests our evangelical faith, or to demand the giving up of one single article of our Creed. After all, there is no need that we should depend on the resources of Christian scholarship, when we come to inquire whether our Bible be indeed and in truth the Word of God. The humblest believer may find the most satisfactory and assuring evidence in the testimony of Christ Himself and His Apostles. It is only a small part of that testimony that we can here adduce, but we are persuaded that even a fraction of the whole will be held by every devout and inquiring mind to be more than sufficient. In His sermon on the Mount, the Saviour speaks in this wise: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily (Amen) I say unto you, till Heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Here is an affirmation closely resembling an oath in its certainty and solemnity, given by the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and covering the question at issue. In it Christ affirms the indestructibility of the law, even in the language in which it is given, for not one word, even the smallest in it, we are told, shall pass till all be fulfilled. It comes from God, it is infallibly untrue, and, in its minutest particular, is certain of accomplishment. The next testimony of our Saviour, to which we desire to advert, is found in a conversation held with the Jews (John x: 34-36) in which He vindicates Himself from the charge of blasphemy preferred against Him because He had called Himself the Son of God. "Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are Gods? If he called them gods unto whom the Word of God came, and the Scripture (what He had just spoken of as 'The Word of God') cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Here our Lord argues the unbreakableness of a clause in the law from the unbreakableness, not only of the law, but of all that the Jews recognized as Scripture—the Word of God. Nay, in proof that He held by the Verbal Inspiration of Scripture, He makes the force of His argument turn upon one word in the clause, Elohim gods. If the clause had not contained that one word Elohim our Lord could not have used it in His vindication, and if He was not sure the report in which He found it was a verbal report, he could not have based His argument upon it. Again, after His resurrection, our Lord, as He walked with the two disciples toward Emmaus. "Began at Moses and all the Prophets, and expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." To His disciples, just before His ascension, He said, "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understanding, that they should understand the Scriptures." There is no part of the Bible that is more frequently assailed than the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. We are told again and again that Moses had little to do with large portions of it, and that much of it is without foundation in fact. But surely here is enough to set this groundless allegation aside in the fact that the Saviour quoted from it, saw in it the prophecies respecting Himself, answered the suggestions and repelled the assaults of Satan with arguments drawn from it, and so used it as to show that He regarded it as the Word of God and written by Moses. If further evidence that He so regarded it be required, it is at hand. To the Pharisees on the subject of divorce, He puts the question, What did Moses command you? In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, He makes Abraham to say, "They have Moses and the Prophets, and if they hear not them neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." To the cavilling Jews He said, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For, had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings" (could there be a plainer and more decisive statement) "how shall ye believe My words." In the writers of the New Testament we find frequent references of similar import. This letter is already too long, and we can only indicate where some of them are to be found—Acts vii: 37-44, and the entire Epistle to the Hebrews from which, it is clear, no one doubted, when it was written that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. With a somewhat fuller reference to a statement of Paul, which unmistakably shows