



## The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth Chapter 7: Old Testament Criticism and New Testament Christianity

by PROFESSOR W. H. GRIFFITH THOMAS, D. D.,  
Wycliffe College, Toronto, Canada Author of "The Bible and  
Modern Criticism," etc., etc., London, England

A large number of Christians feel compelled to demur to the present attitude of many scholars to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is now being taught that the patriarchs of Jewish history are not historic persons; that the records connected with Moses and the giving of the law on Sinai are unhistorical; that the story of the tabernacle in the wilderness is a fabricated history of the time of the Exile; that the prophets cannot be relied on in their references to the ancient history of their own people, or in their predictions of the future; that the writers of the New Testament, who assuredly believed in the records of the Old Testament, were mistaken in the historical value they assigned to those records; that our Lord Himself, in His repeated references to the Scriptures of His own nation, and in His assumption of the Divine authority of those Scriptures, and of the reality of the great names they record, was only thinking and speaking as an ordinary Jew of His day, and was as liable to error in matters of history and of criticism as any of them were.

The present paper is intended to give expression to some of the questions that have arisen in the course of personal study, in connection with collegiate work and also during several years of ordinary pastoral ministry. It is often urged that problems of Old Testament criticism are for experts alone, and can only be decided by them. We venture to question the correctness of this view, especially when it is remembered that to many people "experts" means experts in Hebrew philology only. By all means let us have all possible expert knowledge; but, as Biblical questions are complex, and involve several considerations, we need expert knowledge in archaeology, history, theology, and even spiritual experience, as well as in philology. Every available factor must be taken into account, and the object of the present paper is to emphasize certain elements which appear liable to be overlooked, or at least insufficiently considered.

We do not question for an instant the right of Biblical criticism considered in itself. On the contrary, it is a necessity for all who use the Bible to be

"critics" in the sense of constantly using their "judgment" on what is before them. What is called "higher" criticism is not only a legitimate but a necessary method for all Christians, for by its use we are able to discover the facts and the form of the Old Testament Scriptures. Our hesitation, consequently, is not intended to apply to the method, but to what is believed to be an illegitimate, unscientific, and unhistorical use of it. In fact, we base our objections to much modern criticism of the Old Testament on what we regard as a proper use of a true higher criticism.

### 1. IS THE TESTIMONY OF NINETEEN CENTURIES OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND EXPERIENCE OF NO ACCOUNT IN THIS QUESTION?

For nearly eighteen centuries these modern views of the Old Testament were not heard of. Yet this is not to be accounted for by the absence of intellectual power and scholarship in the Church. Men like Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, to say nothing of the English Puritans and other divines of the seventeenth century, were not intellectually weak or inert, nor were they wholly void of critical acumen with reference to Holy Scripture. Yet they, and the whole Church with them, never hesitated to accept the view of the Old Testament which had come down to them, not only as a heritage from Judaism, but as endorsed by the apostles. Omitting all reference to our Lord, it is not open to question that the views of St. Paul and St. Peter and St. John about the Old Testament were the views of the whole Christian Church until the end of the eighteenth century. And, making every possible allowance for the lack of historical spirit and of modern critical methods, are we to suppose that the whole Church for centuries never exercised its mind on such subjects as the contents, history, and authority of the Old Testament?

Besides, this is a matter which cannot be decided by intellectual criticism alone. Scripture appeals to conscience, heart and will, as well as to mind; and the Christian consciousness, the accumulated spiritual experience of the body of Christ, is not to be lightly regarded, much less set aside, unless it is proved to be unwarranted by fact. While we do not say that "what is new is not true," the novelty of these modern critical views should give us pause before we virtually set aside the spiritual instinct of centuries of Christian experience.

## 2. DOES THE NEW CRITICISM READILY AGREE WITH THE HISTORICAL POSITION OF THE JEWISH NATION?

The Jewish nation is a fact in history, and its record is given to us in the Old Testament. There is no contemporary literature to check the account there given, and archaeology affords us assistance on points of detail only, not for any long or continuous period. This record of Jewish history can be proved to have remained the same for many centuries. Yet much of modern criticism is compelled to reconstruct the history of the Jews on several important points. It involves, for instance, a very different idea of the character of the earliest form of Jewish religion from that seen in the Old Testament as it now stands; its views of the patriarchs are largely different from the conceptions found on the face of the Old Testament narrative; its views of Moses and David are essentially altered from what we have before us in the Old Testament.

Now what is there in Jewish history to support all this reconstruction? Absolutely nothing. We see through the centuries the great outstanding objective fact of the Jewish nation, and the Old Testament is at once the means and the record of their national life. It rose with them, grew with them, and it is to the Jews alone we can look for the earliest testimony to the Old Testament canon.

In face of these facts, it is bare truth to say that the fundamental positions of modern Old Testament criticism are utterly incompatible with the historic growth and position of the Jewish people. Are we not right, therefore, to pause before we accept this subjective reconstruction of history? Let anyone read Wellhausen's article on "Israel" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and then ask himself whether he recognizes at all therein the story as given in the Old Testament.

## 3. ARE THE RESULTS OF THE MODERN VIEW OF THE OLD TESTAMENT REALLY ESTABLISHED?

It is sometimes said that modern criticism is no longer a matter of hypothesis; it has entered the domain of facts. Principal George Adam Smith has gone so far as to say that "modern criticism has won its war against the traditional theories. It only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity." But is this really so? Can we assert that the results of modern criticism are established facts? Indeed Dr. Smith has himself admitted,

since writing the above words, that there are questions still open which were supposed to be settled and closed twenty years ago.

In the first place, is the excessive literary analysis of the Pentateuch at all probable or even thinkable on literary grounds? Let anyone work through a section of Genesis as given by Dr. Driver in his "Introduction", and see whether such a complex combination of authors is at all likely, or whether, even if likely, the various authors can now be distinguished? Is not the whole method far too purely subjective to be probable and reliable?

Further, the critics are not agreed as to the number of documents, or as to the portions to be assigned to each author. A simple instance of this may be given. It is not so many years ago when criticism was content to say that Isa. 40-66, though not by Isaiah, was the work of one author, an unknown prophet of the Exile. But the most recent writers like Duhm, Macfadyen and Wade consider these chapters to be the work of two writers, and that the whole Book of Isaiah (from three authors) did not receive its present form until long after the return from the Exile.

Then, these differences in literary analysis involve differences of interpretation and differences of date, character, and meaning of particular parts of the Old Testament. To prove this, we ask attention to the following extracts from a review of a work on Genesis by Professor Gunkel of Berlin. The review is by Professor Andrew Harper of Melbourne, and appeared in the "Critical Review" for January, 1902. Professor Harper's own position would, we imagine, be rightly characterized as generally favourable to the moderate position of the critical movement. His comments on Gunkel's book are, therefore, all the more noteworthy and significant.

"It will change the whole direction of the conflict as to the early books of the Pentateuch and lead it into more fruitful directions, for it has raised the fundamental question whether the narratives in Genesis are not far older than the authors of the documents marked J. E. P., and whether they are not faithful witnesses to the religion of Israel before prophetic times." "His conclusion will, in many respects, be welcome to those who have felt how incredible some of the assumptions of the Kuenen-Wellhausen school of critics are."

"It will be obvious at a glance what an upsetting of current conceptions in regard to the history of religion must follow if it be accepted."

"They are sufficient, if made good, to upset the whole of the current reconstructions of the religion of Israel. To most readers it will be seen that he has in large part made them good."

"There can be no doubt that his book most skillfully begins a healthy and much-needed reaction. It should, therefore, be read and welcomed by all students of the Old Testament whose minds are open."

In view of Gunkel's position thus endorsed by Professor Harper, is it fair to claim victory for the modern critical theories of the Old Testament? When an able scholar like Professor Harper can speak of a new work as "sufficient to upset the whole of the current reconstructions of the religion of Israel," it is surely premature to speak even in a moment of rhetorical enthusiasm, as Dr. George Adam Smith does, of "victory" and "indemnity." Dr. Smith himself now admits that Gunkel has overturned the Wellhausen theory of the patriarchal narratives. And the same scholar has told us that distinction in the use of the name for God is "too precarious" as the basis of arguments for distinctions of sources. For ourselves we heartily endorse the words of an American scholar when he says:

"We are certain that there will be no final settlement of Biblical questions on the basis of the higher criticism that is now commonly called by that name. Many specific teachings of the system will doubtless abide. But so far forth as it goes upon the assumption that statements of fact -in the Scriptures are pretty generally false, so far forth it is incapable of establishing genuinely permanent results." (Dr. G. A. Smith, "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament", p. 35. Dr. Willis J. Beecher, in "The Bible Student and Teacher", January, 1904) Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, editor of the "British Weekly," remarked quite recently that the "assured results" seem to be vanishing, that no one really knows what they are.

#### 4. IS THE POSITION OF MODERN CRITICISM REALLY COMPATIBLE WITH A BELIEF IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AS A DIVINE REVELATION?

The problem before us is not merely literary, nor only historical; it is essentially religious, and the whole matter resolves itself into one question: Is the Old Testament the record of a Divine revelation? This is the ultimate problem. It is admitted by both sides to be almost impossible to minimize the differences between the traditional and the modern views of the Old Testament. As a reviewer of Dr. George Adam Smith's book, "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament", rightly says:

"The difference is immense; they involve different conceptions of the relation of God to the world; different views as to the course of Israel's history, the process of revelation, and the nature of inspiration. We cannot be lifted from the old to the new position by the influence of a charming literary style, or by the force of the most enthusiastic eloquence." ("American Journal of Theology", Vol. VI., p. 114)

In view of this fundamental difference, the question of the trustworthiness of the Old Testament becomes acute and pressing. In order to test this fairly and thoroughly, let us examine some of the statements made on behalf of the modern view.

We may consider first the rise and progress of religion in Israel. Dr. G. A. Smith says: "It is plain, then, that to whatever heights the religion of Israel afterwards rose, it remained before the age of the great prophets not only similar to, but in all respects above-mentioned identical with, the general Semitic religion; which was not a monotheism, but a polytheism with an opportunity for monotheism at the heart of it, each tribe being attached to one god, as to their particular Lord and Father." ("Modern Criticism", p. 130)

Consider what is meant by the phrase, "in all respects above-mentioned identical with the general Semitic religion," as applied to the religion of Israel previous to the eighth century B. C. Can this view be fairly deduced from the Old Testament as we now have it? Still more, is such a view conceivable in the light of the several preceding centuries of God's special dealings with Israel? Wherein, on this assumption, consisted the

uniqueness of Israel from the time of Abraham to the eighth century B. C.?

We may next take the character of the narratives of Genesis. The real question at issue is the historical character. Modern criticism regards the account in Genesis as largely mythical and legendary. Yet it is certain that the Jews of the later centuries accepted these patriarchs as veritable personages, and the incidents associated with them as genuine history. St. Paul and the other New Testament writers assuredly held the same view. If, then, they are not historical, surely the truths emphasized by prophets and apostles from the patriarchal stories are so far weakened in their supports?

Take, again, the legislation which in the Pentateuch is associated with Moses, and almost invariably introduced by the phrase, "The Lord spake unto Moses." Modern criticism regards this legislation as unknown until the Exile, or a thousand years after the time of Moses. Is it really possible to accept this as satisfactory? Are we to suppose that "The Lord spake to Moses" is only a well-known literary device intended to invest the utterance with greater importance and more solemn sanction? This position, together with the generally accepted view of modern criticism about the invention of Deuteronomy in the days of Josiah, cannot be regarded as in accordance with historical fact or ethical principle.

Canon Driver and Dr. G. A. Smith, it is true, strongly assert the compatibility of the new views with a belief in the Divine authority of the Old Testament, and so far as they themselves are concerned we of course accept their statements *ex animo*. But we wish they would give us more clearly and definitely than they have yet done, the grounds on which this compatibility may be said to rest. To deny historicity, to correct dates by hundreds of years, to reverse judgments on which a nation has rested for centuries, to traverse views which have been the spiritual sustenance of millions, and then to say that all this is consistent with the Old Testament being regarded as a Divine revelation, is at least puzzling, and does not afford mental or moral satisfaction to many who do not dream of questioning the *bona fides* of scholars who hold the views now criticized. The extremes to which Dr. Cheyne has gone seem to many the logical outcome of the principles with which modern criticism, even of a moderate type, starts. *Facilis descensus Averno*, and we should like to be

shown the solid and logical halting-place where those who refuse to go with Cheyne think that they and we can stand.

Sir W. Robertson Nicoll, commenting March 12, 1903, on a speech delivered by the then Prime Minister of Great Britain (Mr. Balfour) in connection with the Bible Society's Centenary, made the following significant remarks: "The immediate results of criticism are in a high degree disturbing. So far they have scarcely been understood by the average Christian. But the plain man who has been used to receive everything in the Bible as a veritable Word of God cannot fail to be perplexed, and deeply perplexed, when he is told that much of the Old Testament and the New is unhistorical, and when he is asked to accept the statement that God reveals Himself by myth and legend as well as by the truth, of fact. Mr. Balfour must surely know that many of the higher critics have ceased to be believers. More than twenty years ago the present writer, walking with Julius Wellhausen in the quaint streets of Greifswald, ventured to ask him whether, if his views were accepted, the Bible could retain its place in the estimation of the common people. 'I cannot see how that is possible,' was the sad reply."

It is no mere question of how we may use the Old Testament for preaching, or how much is left for use after the critical views are accepted. But even our preaching will lack a great deal of the note of certitude. If we are to regard certain biographies as unhistorical, it will not be easy to draw lessons for conduct, and if the history is largely legendary, our deductions about God's government and providence must be essentially weakened. But the one point to be faced is the historic credibility of those parts of the Old Testament questioned by modern criticism, and the historical and religious value of the documents of the Pentateuch. Meanwhile, we ask to have *char* proof of the compatibility of the modern views with the acceptance of the Old Testament as the record of a Divine revelation.

##### 5. MODERN CRITICISM BASED ON A SOUND PHILOSOPHY SUCH AS CHRISTIANS CAN ACCEPT?

At the foundation of much modern thought is the philosophy known as Idealism, which, as often interpreted, involves a theory of the universe that finds no room for supernatural interpositions of any kind. The great law of the universe, including the physical, mental, and moral realms, is

said to be evolution, and though this doubtless presupposes an original Creator, it does not, on the theory now before us, permit of any subsequent direct intervention of God during the process of development. This general philosophical principle applied to history has assuredly influenced, if it has not almost moulded, a great deal of modern criticism of the Old Testament. It is not urged that all who accept even the position of a moderate criticism, go the full length of the extreme evolutionary theory; but there can be no reasonable doubt that most of the criticism of the Old Testament is materially affected by an evolutionary theory of all history which tends to minimize Divine intervention in the affairs of the people of Israel. It is certainly correct to say that the presupposition of much present-day critical reasoning is a denial of the supernatural, and especially of the predictive element in prophecy.

As to the theory of evolution regarded as a process of uninterrupted differentiation of existences, under purely natural laws, and without any Divine intervention, it will suffice to say that it is "not proven" in the sphere of natural science, while in the realms of history and literature it is palpably false. The records of history and of literature reveal from time to time the great fact and factor of personality, the reality of personal power, and this determinative element has a peculiar way of setting at naught all idealistic theories of a purely natural and uniform progress in history and letters. The literature of today is not necessarily higher than that produced in the past; the history of the last century is not in every way .and always superior to that of its predecessors. Even a "naturalistic" writer like Professor Percy Gardner testifies to the fact and force of personality in the following remarkable terms:

"There is, in fact, a great force in history which is not, so far as we can judge, evolutionary, and the law of which is very hard to trace--the force of personality and character." And quite apart from such instances of personality as have arisen from time to time through the centuries, there is one Personality who has not yet been accounted for by any theory of evolution--the Person of Jesus of Nazareth.

There are sufficient data in current Old Testament criticism to warrant the statement that it proceeds from presuppositions concerning the origins of history, religion, and the Bible, which, in their essence, are subversive of belief in a Divine revelation. And such being the case, we naturally

look with grave suspicion on results derived from so unsound a philosophical basis.

## 6. CAN PURELY NATURALISTIC PREMISES BE ACCEPTED WITH OUT COMING TO PURELY NATURALISTIC CONCLUSIONS?

Kuenen and Wellhausen are admittedly accepted as masters by our leading Old Testament "higher critics" in England, Scotland, and America, and the results of their literary analysis of the Pentateuch are generally regarded as conclusive by their followers. On the basis of this literary dissection, certain conclusions are formed as to the character and growth of Old Testament religion, and, as a result, the history of the Jews is reconstructed. The Book of Deuteronomy is said to be mainly, if not entirely, a product of the reign of Josiah, the accounts of the tabernacle and worship are of exilic date; monotheism in Israel was of late date, and was the outcome of a growth from polytheism; and the present Book of Genesis reflects the thoughts of the time of its composition or compilation in or near the date of the Exile.

Now it is known that Kuenen and Wellhausen deny the supernatural element in the Old Testament. This is the "presupposition" of their entire position. Will anyone say that it does not materially affect their conclusions? And is there any safe or logical halting-ground for those who accept so many of their premises? The extreme subjectivity of Canon Cheyne ought not to be a surprise to any who accept the main principles of modern higher criticism; it is part of the logical outcome of the general position. We gladly distinguish between the extremists and the other scholars who see no incompatibility between the acceptance of many of the literary and historical principles of Kuenen and Wellhausen and a belief in the Divine source and authority of the Old Testament. But we are bound to add that the unsatisfying element in the writings of moderate men like Canon Driver and Principal George Adam Smith is that, while accepting so much of the "naturalism" of the German school, they do not give us any clear assurance of the strength of the foundation on which they rest and ask us to rest. The tendency of their position is certainly towards a minimizing of the supernatural in the Old Testament.

Take, as one instance, the Messianic element. In spite of the universal belief of Jews and Christians in a personal Messiah, a belief derived in

the first place solely from the Old Testament, and supported for Christians by the New, modern criticism will not allow much clear and undoubted prediction of Him. Insight into existing conditions is readily granted to the prophets, but they are not allowed to have had much foresight into future conditions connected with the Messiah. Yet Isaiah's glowing words remain, and demand a fair, full exegesis such as they do not get from many modern scholars. Dr. James Wells, of Glasgow, wrote in the "British Weekly" some time ago of the new criticism on this point:

"The fear of prediction in the proper sense of the term is ever before its eyes. It gladly enlarges on fore-shadowings, a moral historical growth which reaches its culmination in Christ; and anticipations of the Spirit of Christ; but its tendency is always to minimize the prophetic element in the Old Testament."

Another example of the tendency of modern criticism to minimize and explain away the supernatural element may be given from a book entitled, "The Theology and Ethics of the Hebrews," by Dr. Archibald Duff, Professor in the Yorkshire College, Bradford. This is his account of Moses at the burning bush:

"He was shepherding his sheep among the red granite mountains . . . . The man sat at dawn by the stream, and watched the fiery rocks. Yonder gleamed the level sunlight across the low growth. Each spine glistened against the rising sun. The man was a poet, one fit for inspiration. He felt that the dreams of his soul were the whisperings of his God, the place His sanctuary. He bowed and worshipped," (p. 6.) This, at least, is not the *prima facie* impression derived from the account given in Exodus.

One more illustration may be given of modern critical methods of dealing with narratives of the Old Testament which were evidently intended to be regarded as historical. In the "International Critical Commentary" on Numbers, Dr. G. B. Gray, of Mansfield College, Oxford, thus writes on what he terms "the priestly section of the book"

"For the history of the Mosaic age the whole section is valueless." "The historical impression given by (P) of the Mosaic age is altogether unhistorical, and much of the detail . . . can . . . be demonstrated to be entirely unreal, or at least untrue of the age in question." "This history is fictitious."

These statements at once set aside the history contained in more than three-quarters of the whole Book of Numbers, while as to the rest Dr. Gray's verdict is by no means reassuring, and he clearly does not possess much confidence in even the small quantity that escapes his condemnation. The brazen serpent is said to be an invention on the part of some "who had come under the higher prophetic teaching" before Hezekiah, and is meant "to controvert the popular belief" in the healing power of the serpent by ascribing it to Jehovah. As to the story of Balaam, Dr. Gray wrote: [sic]

"It may, indeed, contain other historical features, such as the name of Balak, who may have been an actual king of Moab; but no means at present exist for distinguishing any further between the historical or legendary elements and those which are supplied by the creative faculty and the religious feeling of the writers."

What is any ordinary earnest Christian to make of all these statements? The writer of the Book of Numbers evidently composed what professes to be history, and what he meant to be read as history, and yet according to Dr. Gray all this has no historical foundation. We can only say that the Christian Church will require very much more convincing proofs before they can accept the critical position, and it does not facilitate our acceptance of this wholesale process of invention to be told that it is due to "the creative faculty and the religious feeling of the writers."

As to the fact that so many of our British and American "higher critics" are firm believers in the Divine authority of the Old Testament, and of a Divine revelation embodied in it, we cannot but feel the force of the words of the late Dr. W. H. Green, of Princeton: "They who have themselves been thoroughly grounded in the Christian faith may, by a happy inconsistency, hold fast their old convictions, while admitting principles, methods, and conclusions that are logically at war with them. But who can be surprised if others shall with stricter logic carry what has been thus commended to them to its legitimate conclusions?"

## 7. CAN WE OVERLOOK THE EVIDENCE OF ARCHAEOLOGY?

It is well known that during the last sixty years a vast number of archaeological discoveries have been made in Egypt, Palestine, Babylonia,

and Assyria. Many of these have shed remarkable light on the historical features of the Old Testament. A number of persons and periods have been illuminated by these discoveries and are now seen with a clearness which was before impossible.

Now it is a simple and yet striking fact that not one of these discoveries during the whole of this time has given any support to the distinctive features and principles of the higher critical position, while, on the other hand, many of them have afforded abundant confirmation of the traditional and conservative view of the Old Testament.

Let us consider a few of these discoveries. Only a little over forty years ago the conservative "Speaker's Commentary" actually had to take into consideration the critical arguments then so prevalent in favor of the late invention of writing. This is an argument which is never heard now in critical circles. The change of attack is most striking. While forty or fifty years ago it was argued that Moses could not possibly have had sufficient learning to write the Pentateuch, now it is argued as the result of these modern discoveries that he would have been altogether behind his contemporaries if he had not been able to write. Again, the Babylonian story of the flood agrees in long sections with the account in Genesis, and it is known that the Babylonian version was in existence for ages before the dates assigned to the Genesis narrative by the critical school. Professor Sayce rightly calls this a crucial test of the critical position. The historicity of the kings mentioned in Genesis 14 was once seriously questioned by criticism, but this is impossible today, for their historical character has been proved beyond all question, and, in particular, it is now known that the Amraphel of that chapter is the Hammurabi of the Monuments and a contemporary with Abraham. The puzzling story of Sarah and Hagar is also now seen to be in exact agreement with Babylonian custom. Then again, the Egypt of Joseph and Moses is true to the smallest details of the life of the Egypt of that day and is altogether different from the very different Egypt of later ages. Sargon, who for centuries was only known from the one reference to him in Isa. 20:1, is now seen to have been one of the most important kings of Assyria. And the Aramaic language of Daniel and Ezra, which has so often been accused of lateness, is proved to be in exact accord with the Aramaic of that age, as shown by the Papyri discovered at Elephantine in Egypt.

Now these, and others like them, are tangible proofs which can be verified by ordinary people. Hebrew philology is beyond most of us and is too subjective for any convincing argument to be based upon it, but archaeology offers an objective method of putting historical theories to the test.

Not the least important feature of the archaeological argument is that a number of leading archaeologists who were formerly in hearty agreement with the critical school, have now abandoned this view and oppose it. As Sir William Robertson Nicoll has forcibly said: "The significant fact is that the great first-hand archaeologists as a rule do not trust the higher criticism. This means a great deal more than can be put on paper to account for their doubt. It means that they are living in an atmosphere where arguments that flourish outside do not thrive."

Professor Flinders Petrie, the great Egyptologist, uttered these words not long ago: "I have come to the conclusion that there is a far more solid basis than seems to be supposed by many critics . . . . I have not the slightest doubt that contemporary documents give a truly solid foundation for the records contained in the Pentateuch . . . . The essential point is that some of these critical people support from an a priori basis instead of writing upon ascertained facts. We should remember that writing at the time of the Exodus was as familiar as it is now . . . . The fact is that it is hopeless for these people by means merely of verbal criticism to succeed in solving all difficulties that arise."

## **8. ARE THE VIEWS OF MODERN CRITICISM CONSISTENT WITH THE WITNESS OF OUR LORD TO THE OLD TESTAMENT?**

The Christian Church approaches the Old Testament mainly and predominantly from the standpoint of the resurrection of Christ. We naturally inquire what our Master thought of the Old Testament, for if it comes to us with His authority, and we can discover His view of it, we ought to be satisfied.

In the days of our Lord's life on earth one pressing question was, "What think ye of the Christ?" Another was, "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" These questions are still being raised in one form or

another, and today, as of old, the two great problems--two "storm-centres"; as they have well been called--are Christ and the Bible.

The two problems really resolve themselves into one, for Christ and the Bible are inseparable. If we follow Christ, He will teach us of the Bible; and if we study our Bible, it will point us to Christ. Each is called the Word of God.

Let us, first of all, be quite clear as to our meaning of our Lord as "The Word of God." "In the beginning was the Word." A word is an oral or visible expression of an invisible thought. The thought needs the word for its expression, and the word is intended to represent the thought accurately, even if not completely. We cannot in any degree be sure of the thought unless we can be sure of the word. Our Lord as the Word, therefore, is the personal and visible expression of the invisible God. (John 14; Heb. 1:3.) We believe that He is an accurate "expression" of God, and that as the Word He reveals God and conveys God's will to us in such a way as to be inerrant and infallible. As the Incarnate Word He is infallible.

He came, among other things, to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37), and it is a necessary outcome of this purpose that He should bear infallible witness. He came to reveal God and God's will, and this implies and requires special knowledge. It demands that every assertion of His be true. The Divine knowledge did not, because it could not, undergo any change by the Incarnation. He continued to subsist in the form of God even while He existed in the form of man. (Phil. 2:6. See Dr. Gifford's "The Incarnation:")

In view of this position, we believe that, as Bishop Ellicott says ("Christus Comprobator") we have a right to make this appeal to the testimony of Christ to the Old Testament. The place it occupied in His life and ministry is sufficient warrant for referring to His use of it. It is well known that, as far as the Old Testament canon is concerned, our highest authority is that of our Lord Himself; and what is true of the Old Testament as a whole, is surely true of these parts to which our Lord specifically referred.

Let us be clear, however, as to what we mean in making this appeal. We do not for an instant intend thereby to close all possible criticism of the Old Testament. There are numbers of questions quite untouched by

anything our Lord said, and there is consequently ample scope for sober, necessary, and valuable criticism. But what we do say is, that anything in the Old Testament stated by our Lord as a fact, or implied as a fact, is, or ought to be, thereby closed for those who hold Christ to be infallible. Criticism can do anything that is not incompatible with the statements of our Lord; but where Christ has spoken, surely "the matter is closed."

What, then, is our Lord's general view of the Old Testament? There is no doubt that His Old Testament was practically, if not actually, the same as ours, and that He regarded it as of Divine authority, as the final court of appeal for all questions connected with it. The way in which He quotes it shows this. To the Lord Jesus the Old Testament was authoritative and final, because Divine.

No one can go through the Gospels without being impressed with the deep reverence of our Lord for the Old Testament, and with His constant use of it in all matters of religious thought and life. His question, "Have ye never read?" His assertion, "It is written," His testimony, "Ye search the Scriptures" (R. V), are plainly indicative of His view of the Divine authority of the Old Testament as we have it. He sets His seal to its historicity and its revelation of God. He supplements, but never supplants it. He amplifies and modifies, but never nullifies it. He fulfils, i.e. fills full, but never makes void.

This general view is confirmed by His detailed references to the Old Testament. Consider His testimonies to the persons, and to the facts of the old covenant.

There is scarcely a historical book, from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, to which our Lord does not refer; while it is perhaps significant that His testimony includes references to every book of the Pentateuch, to Isaiah, to Jonah, to Daniel, and to miracles--the very parts most called in question today.

Above all, it is surely of the deepest moment that at His temptation He should use three times as the Word of God the book about which there has, perhaps, been most controversy of all.

Again, therefore, we say that everything to which Christ can be said, on any honest interpretation, to have referred, or which He used as a fact, is

thereby sanctioned and sealed by the authority of our Infallible Lord. "Dominus locutus est; causa finita est."

Nor can this position be turned by the statement that Christ simply adopted the beliefs of His day without necessarily sanctioning them as correct. Of this there is not the slightest proof, but very much to the contrary. On some of the most important subjects of His day He went directly against prevailing opinion. His teaching about God, about righteousness, about the Messiah, about tradition, about the Sabbath, about the Samaritans, about women, about divorce, about the baptism of John, were diametrically opposed to that of the time. And this opposition was deliberately grounded on the Old Testament which our Lord charged them with misinterpreting. The one and only question of difference between Him and the Jews as to the Old Testament was that of interpretation. Not a vestige of proof can be adduced that He and they differed at all in their general view of its historical character or Divine authority. If the current Jewish views were wrong, can we think our Lord would have been silent on a matter of such moment, about a book which He cites or alludes to over four hundred times, and which He made His constant topic in teaching concerning Himself? If the Jews were wrong, Jesus either knew it, or He did not. If He knew it, why did He not correct them as in so many other and detailed instances? If He did not know it—but I will not finish.

Nor can this witness to the Old Testament be met by asserting that the limitation of our Lord's earthly life kept Him within current views of the Old Testament which need not have been true views. This statement ignores the essential force of His personal claim to be "the Word."

On more than one occasion our Lord claimed to speak from God, and that everything He said had the Divine warrant. Let us notice carefully what this involves. It is sometimes said that our Lord's knowledge was limited, and that He lived here as man, not as God. Suppose we grant this for argument's sake. Very well; as man He lived in God and on God, and He claimed that everything He said and did was from God and through God. If, then, the limitations were from God, so also were the utterances; and, as God's warrant was claimed for every one of these, they are therefore Divine and infallible. (John 5:19; 5:30; 7:13; 8:26; 12:49; 14:24; 17:8.) Even though we grant to the full a theory that will compel us to accept a temporary disuse or non-use of the functions of Deity in the

Person of our Lord, yet the words actually uttered as man are claimed to be from God, and therefore we hold them to be infallible. We rest, therefore, upon our Lord's personal claim to say all and do all by the Father, from the Father, for the Father.

There is, of course, no question of partial knowledge after the resurrection, when our Lord was manifestly free from all limitations of earthly conditions. Yet it was after His resurrection also that He set His seal to the Old Testament. (Luke 24 :44. )

We conclude that our Lord's positive statements on the subject of the Old Testament are not to be rejected without charging Him with error. If, on these points, on which we can test and verify Him, we find that He is not reliable, what real comfort can we have in accepting His higher teaching, where verification is impossible? We believe we are on absolutely safe ground when we say that what the Old Testament was to our Lord, it must be and shall be to us.

## CONCLUSION

We ask a careful consideration of these eight inquiries. Taken separately, they carry weight, but taken together they have a cumulative effect, and should be seriously pondered by all who are seeking to know the truth on this momentous subject.

We may be perfectly sure that no criticism of the Old Testament will ever be accepted by the Christian Church as a whole, which does not fully satisfy the following conditions:

1. It must admit in all its assumptions, and take fully into consideration, the supernatural element which differentiates the Bible from all other books.
2. It must be in keeping with the enlightened spiritual experience of the saints of God in all ages, and make an effectual appeal to the piety and spiritual perception of those who know by personal experience the power of the Holy Ghost.
3. It must be historically in line with the general tradition of Jewish history and the unique position of the Hebrew nation through the centuries.

4. It must be in unison with that apostolic conception of the authority and inspiration of the Old Testament, which is so manifest in the New Testament.
  
5. Above all, it must be in accordance with the universal belief of the Christian Church in our Lord's infallibility as a Teacher, and as "the Word made flesh."

If and when modern higher criticism can satisfy these requirements, it will not merely be accepted, but will command the universal, loyal, and even enthusiastic adhesion of all Christians. Until then, we wait, and also maintain our position that "the old is better."

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PO Box 1726  
Hampton, NH 03842  
603-892-0827  
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