

THE BIBLE AND MODERN CRITICISM

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The Bible and Modern Criticism by Sir Robert Anderson & Handley C. G. Moule

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SIR ROBERT ANDERSON & HANDLEY C. G. MOULE

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THE BIBLE
AND
MODERN CRITICISM

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WITH A PREFACE
BY THE RIGHT REVEREND
HANDLEY C. G. MOULE, D.D.
BISHOP OF DURHAM

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PREFACE

THE following chapters have little need of any prefatory remarks of mine. Alike their subject, their material, and the author's handling of that material, will command the attention of a wide circle of readers, and will indeed repay it. But I am honoured by the request to prefix these few paragraphs, and I obey.

I have the author's full leave to say that there are details in the matter of the book, and even certain aspects of the treatment, from which I hold myself detached. For example, I cannot commit myself to concurrence with the whole of the important but incidental criticism of the Revised Version. I am in suspense on some main items of Sir R. Anderson's discussion of outlines of the prophetic future, while I regard with profound respect the ability and the suggestiveness of the discussion. Again, I must dissociate myself from certain passages which

reflect upon the *animus* of some representatives of the New Criticism with a severity I cannot follow. Among both leaders and followers in that school I reckon some much-respected friends, of whose reverent and Christian aims I am sure; and that fact is continually with me in any expression of the profound anxiety with which I view the tendency of the school.

But when I have said this, I am amply free, as I am earnestly willing, to avow my mental and spiritual sympathy with the great *envoi* of this remarkable book.

What is the book? It is the free and (to use the word in its best sense) popular presentation of the results of an independent study of the New Criticism, as actually put before us in representative works, done by a student entirely free from professional bias, and trained in a severe school of legal and judicial investigation to sift witnesses and weigh evidence. It is an example of exactly the sort of work which, in my opinion, the Church needs in an eminent degree, and which is, I fear, lamentably rare to-day—the careful study of religious problems by *laymen at once open-minded and devout*. In the best specimens of such study there is often, to my thinking, a quite peculiar value; a fresh and bracing air of thought all their

own, a faculty for throwing wholesome light upon subjects tangled by the over-handling of experts. Experts, as Sir R. Anderson often pertinently reminds us, are by no means, as such, good judges.

"At the bar we sometimes find a man's logic swamped by his learning; and so it is in theology." Thus wrote the late Lord Hatherley to me, in a private letter, thirty years ago, and went on to say that he wished for leisure to illustrate the poor reasoning power of some of the greatest German *literati*. Lord Hatherley was one of our first masters of evidence. He was a life-long student of the Holy Scriptures. And the modest Introduction to his *Continuity* is a fine summing-up in favour of their properly supernatural character. That book was a noble lay contribution to the defence of faith. Another master of the practical application of legal science gives us another here.

And is there not a cause? The attitude towards Holy Scripture of a vast deal of cultured thought and responsible teaching at present offers assuredly a problem which it is idle to dismiss as if it were not portentous. By whatever process it has come to be, teachers and disciples far and wide now regard the Old Testament (to speak

of it only for the instant) from an angle totally different (I use the words deliberately) from that taken by our Lord Jesus Christ, alike before and after His Resurrection from the dead. To Him, tempted, teaching, suffering, dying, risen, "*it is written*" was a formula of infinite import. The principle this expressed lay at the heart of His teaching. It is not too much to say that it belonged to the pulse, to the vital breath, of His message to others, and, what is mysteriously yet more, to His certainty about Himself. But in wide circles of our Christendom it is now openly or tacitly taken to be out of date, to be narrow, to be uncultured, to make much of "*it is written*;" as if an appeal to a definite supernatural book-revelation were a thing discredited and to be given up.

If a severe necessity of irrefragable truth demands this, be it so. But let not the conclusion be reached, or rested in, light-heartedly, and smoothly decorated with the comfortable phraseology current in articles and reviews. The conclusion, if true, is portentous. It is a confession that on a matter central in His message our Master was much mistaken. He appears thus as not merely capable of nescience; that is a very different matter; the most cautious, the most