

## THE PRESBYTERY OF DENVER

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### Report of Committee to investigate the Teachings of the D.U. and the I. S. of T.

To the Presbytery of Denver:

Dear Brethern:

Your Committee, appointed at the September meeting to investigate and report concerning the nature of the religious views held and instruction imparted at the Denver University and the Iliff School of Theology, beg leave to report as follows:

The following letter and interrogatories were addressed to professors having to do with Biblical matters:

Dear Sir:

Would you kindly give the information asked for in the appended interrogatories,

I have been directed as a "man under authority" to make the inquiry, and trust that a frank response may be returned as soon as you may find it convenient.

Of course, in view of the fact that the school is conducted under the auspices of the Methodist Episcopal denomination, it is realized that representatives of another body have no right in the premises to intrude. But inasmuch as other denominations are represented in the student body, this may be considered as justifying what might otherwise be unwarranted.

Thanking you, therefore, for the anticipated information,  
I am

Dec. 7, 1918.

Yours very sincerely,  
(Signed) W. M. Campbell,

#### Interrogatories:

1. The text books used or reference books recommended in the course of religious or Biblical instruction given in your department have been selected, have they not, because their views are in accord with those held by you and the School authorities?
2. Is the theory of evolution accepted by you and taken for granted, understood and applied, on occasion, in your work as an instructor?
3. In the estimate of Biblical literature, as to authors, chronology etc., is your view point that of the Higher Critical School - commonly so called?

The first response to this was from a Professor in the Iliff School of Theology, indicating some doubt as to the writer's authority for making the inquiry.

The following note was immediately sent to him and to all the others:



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Dear Sir:

I should have mentioned that those "interrogatories" were sent by me as chairman of a committee appointed for that purpose by the Presbytery of Denver. Please pardon the oversight and kindly respond with the information desired.

Thank you.  
Dec. 12, 1918.

Yours very sincerely",

To this no reply has been received *from him.*

Courteous but unsatisfactory responses were received from other I. S. of T. professors. They were, however, in line with and confirmatory of the questionable positions asserted in Presbytery and on the strength of which your committee was appointed.

No reply came from the D. U. professors until after the completion of this report, except a brief one from the department of Biology in which we were less interested than in the others and one from a professor in the extension and summer school work. The one coming from the D.U. since the writing of the report is of the same unsatisfactory nature as those referred to above.

Any who may have considered silence as the better part of valor, must not complain if it be interpreted as a confession. The impression conveyed by the responses while confirming the belief that there was "something rotten in the state of Denmark", led one to realize at the same time that there was not absent from the replies somewhat of a consciousness of this. Nevertheless, it so asserted itself through a variety of sources that your committee feels compelled and justified in making a decidedly adverse report.

If "a man is known by the company he keeps", it is no less true of educational positions. In this case the text books and works of reference are inimical to the integrity of the Scriptures as evangelically held. What would be thought of Christian parents who in the religious education of their children, installed into places of honor, and made chief use of works which decried the fundamental and holiest elements of the faith which they were endeavoring to impress upon their minds and hearts? In such an exhibition of parental folly, would it be surprising if the plastic minds of the young were molded erroneously? Why then should a professed Christian institution be guilty of it? Or to change the analogy, what would you think of a restaurateur whose menus would in the main be composed of dishes containing poisonous elements, and who was willing to take the responsibility for the death of his patrons? Again let it be asked why should a professed Christian institution be guilty of this in the more precious realm of the Spiritual?

It is interesting to note that most of the works to which these authors kowtow are "made in Germany." They themselves are largely



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echoes. In these days when there has been such a slump in German values, one wonders whether they are still disposed to admiringly drive golden nails into those wooden statues.

In view of the fact that much of this teaching has been held responsible for that eclipse of faith which produced Prussian militarism and its harvest of woes, it would be pertinent to inquire, whether a true Christian patriotism does not point to the propriety of exercising such an educational censorship as may deliver our youth from being honeycombed with the element of decay and death. For the fruit will be "each after his kind" whether found in Germany, Britain, America or Timbuctoo.

The following will indicate the attitude and teaching of authors who are exalted to places of honor in the curricula and used as guides in the formation of the beliefs of young men and maidens. The evolution theory is made the basic explanation of all phenomena along the whole gamut from the physical up to and including the psychical. Religion, in all its manifestations, Christianity included, has to go through this mill to be ground out along the line of natural law. It is needless to say that they look, therefore, with unfriendly eyes on all claims to the supernatural, miraculous or interventional in nature or spiritual experience.

According to this theory, as held by these authors, man was at first naught but an emergent brute, and the earliest religious experience of the race was fetishism which by evolutionary development was carried forward without divine intervention through all later phases - Christianity included. "Invervention" is a word which is anathema in their vocabulary.

It is rather amusing to note the cool way in which man's primitive estate, as recorded in Genesis, is ignored. It interferes with their theory. Not only so but the first chapter of Romans is also apparently outside the range of their vision. One would suppose that these writings, to say the least, would be on a par with the heathen sources of which they make so much. In line with all this, one of the text books affirms that a higher religion, at first as the gift of God, "is impossible to conceive". Monotheism instead of being first was last. It was an evolutionary achievement.

Because of this, all religious cults prior to Christianity, from fetishism onward, are to be regarded affectionately by later worshippers, Christians included, for they have been our former homes on the evolutionary pilgrimage. You may now be living in a finer house, yet you should have an affection for the old log cabin of former days although you might not care to take up your abode there again. It was good and worthy and appropriate in its day.



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Amid all the fine phrases with which Christianity is eulogized by these authors, you realize that it is but a laborious exhibition of HOW NOT TO DO A THING. The cross is studiously avoided and when in one instance, at least, the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord is incidentally mentioned it is that it may be not only discounted, but derided. "The doctrine of imputation has its roots in a conception of God which Christianity condemns and superseded, and, therefore it has no place in Christian theology". "A sin-bearer is not one who bears the punishment of sin, for no one but the sinner can bear that". There is in these textbooks a constant air of unfriendliness toward the supernatural in the Bible. It is really amusing, were it not so tragic, to see how they sweat in order to squeeze it into the straitjacket of their theory. All sorts of tenuous explanatory devices are brought into requisition, if, preadventure, this element, like the Lord of Glory himself, may be crucified. Lest this should seem an exaggeration we hasten to say, that the crossing of the Jordan was made possible, in their estimation, by the caving in of the banks. And when Peter was delivered from prison, it was not a case of divine intervention, but a friendly service by some of the soldiers on guard, for did not Herod put them to death on account of it!

After besmirching the dependability of sacred writers whose data are in conflict with their critical theories - nay even affirming them to be deminated by questionable motives in some instances, we might well, were these things so, throw up our hands in despair and write, "Ichabod", over all.

Of inspiration in the evangelic sense, there is none. They have taken away our Lord and when they pretend to lead us to him, he turns out to be a counterfeit, for they have divested him of his deity. Biblical authorship and chronology, whereby Moses, as a legislator and prophet, is largely relegated to the scrap heap, Deuteronomy being foisted on the nation in the days of Josiah and the balance of the Pentateuch being post - exilic. Into the labyrinthine windings of their theory, where a marvelous game of hide and seek is played, there is no time to enter. Amid the Kaleidoscopic shiftings there is the ever present need of giving obedience to the compulsory ship of the evolutionary taskmaster. And so, like the heathen of old, they freely use their axes in the temple of God, and sacred personalities, not excluding our blessed Lord himself, are held up as deceiving and being deceived.

With reference to certain methods of interpretation, we are told that "the example of the writer to the Hebrews does not make it right". The same scant reverence is paid to all whose records may militate against their desiderated conclusions. You get the impression that the theory is more important than the Scriptures and that it is more legitimate and trustworthy to swear by a Driver or a Smith or some German rationalist than by Moses or Peter or Paul - or even the Lord himself. The ritual of Israel was a hindrance rather than a help, tempting them to idolitry and to a materialistic religion. This is, of course, a sitting in judgement upon God, who ordered the ritual. But



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what is a little thing like that in the estimation of a higher critic.

The author of the Book of Chronicles is a special object of their spleen, as to whose alleged ignorance and questionable motive, they have this to say in one place; "that he wrote his history from the standpoint of generations after the exile, when the Priest legislation had been so long in force, that it was impossible for him to imagine any part of Israel's history as without it". And so, his record regarding the Davidic organizations for religious services was simply the creation of his imagination.

Genesis, up to the call of Abram, is legendary, while in the subsequent patriarch records, there is only a nucleus of believable biographical data. One author, whose works are used as textbooks in the D.U., so rings the changes on the word, "probable", in the most fundamental matters, that we cannot resist the temptation to dub him, "Old probabilities". His use of it is almost ad infinitum, and certainly ad nauseam. And yet he lifts up his critical ax, cutting away here and adding there, then standing back to gaze admiringly on the destructive results, and expects applause for his service. And he gets it in certain quarters. He lays down certain canons of Higher Critical interpretation which we understand he has recently applied in the issuance of a shorter New Testament, commendatory advertisements of which have appeared in many church journals. One of these canons is to the effect that when you run afoul of more than one story of the same event, cut out the chronologically later one. If you do not feel competent to perform the surgical operation, why, in that event send for the nearest Higher Critic. Perhaps you had better select one as you would a family physician, so as to be the better prepared for an emergency.

The reason assigned for this is that the latter are more liable to get bewhiskered with the miraculous. Take, therefore, those which are more naturalistic. The need of this he emphasizes by another canon, viz; that "the gospel writers lived in an age when it was customary to regard that which was marvelous or even that which to us seems natural, as supernatural." And so the Testament must be put in the Higher Critic dry dock that it may be made seaworthy. When finally it leaves the ways we will have, according to them, a smaller craft to be sure, but trimmer and much more dependable than the old one which has sailed in blessing over sinful human seas for the antecedent centuries.

While not wishing to be understood as visiting with universal condemnation all that has been done by them, one is nevertheless impressed with the element of irreverence in their handling of the sacred Scriptures; and the issue of their work is not in harmony with the apostolic declaration that we have these Scriptures because "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost".

If the sacred writers were as incompetent, unreliable and moved



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by such questionable considerations as, in certain instances the Higher Critics declare them to be, our Lord included, then good by old Bible. You are not a sea-worthy craft in which to set sail for eternity

When one sees these men at work, and the issues thereof, he is reminded of Joel, Chapter 1., verse 4. But we are encouraged when one fo them lugubriously confesses as follows: "Saddest of all, the Bible which is being taught in the majority of our schools, (Sunday Schools), is the Bible of later Judaism and the middle ages."

To have any institution, therefore, and more especially a professedly a Christian one, harboring such craft, is to be playing into the hands of forces inimical to the integrity and perpetuity of our Christian civilization as well as of that Christian democracy, the virtues of which they may be shouting, and no doubt shouting honestly, from the house tops. This is merely placing it on the lower plane of the life that now is. But what about its relation to the interests of the immeasurable and irrevocable life beyond? This should give pause.

In view of all this, your committee Recommends:

RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) That in view of the conditions obtaining in this respect, our young people seeking collegiate training be advised to select, if possible, some institution where such pitfalls are neither found nor countenanced.

In default of this, that they be urged to take counsel, as to such matters, with their pastors or others qualified by knowledge and wisdom as well as willingness to help pilot them to conclusions in harmony with the Word of God while pursuing such studies.

(b) That no student for the ministry under our care, pursuing his studies at these institutions, be recommended to our Board of Education.

(c) That in view of the crying need of safeguarding sound doctrine, prayerful and unceasing effort be instituted for the establishment of a College under exclusive Synodical control to worthily meet the needs of this Rocky Mountain region by fostering the secular and religious educational training of our young people along the scientifically established lines of investigation.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

William M. Campbell )  
Robert T. Caldwell ) Committee  
J. Mont. Travis )