

HIGHER CRITICISM ENTHRONED--THE BIBLE DEBASED.

SO PRONOUNCED is the acceptance of Evolution and Higher Criticism in the Episcopal Church that the Rev. Benj. F. DeCosta, D.D., has felt that he can best serve God and the cause of truth by separating himself from the denomination. As heretofore set forth in this journal, it is only a question of time until all men and women of character and true Christian principle will be forced to take similar steps out of all denominations,--from the pews as well as from the pulpits. We are in the "harvest" time of this age, and divine providence is permitting conditions which will demonstrate who are "wheat" and who are "tares." Such a separation must take place before the great symbolic burning day for "tares" can come, and before the "wheat" can be glorified as God's Kingdom in power.

"Babylon is fallen, is fallen; come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues." ([Rev. 18:24](#).) But there is a wide difference between leaving "Babylon" and leaving the Lord's Church or Kingdom. All along it has been true that "the Lord knoweth them that are his:" he knew every consecrated one even tho surrounded by the unconsecrated ten or twenty times more numerous. Now the Lord will demonstrate what he already knows by separating the wheat from the tares. However, from the divine standpoint none have ever been recognized as the Kingdom class except the faithful little flock--the fully consecrated "wheat." And this is shown by our Lord's word when again, referring to the *separation work* of this harvest period, he declares that "he will gather *out of his Kingdom* all things that offend and them which do iniquity."--[Matt. 13:41](#).

Evidently, then, it is one thing to gather out of Babylon his people, and quite another thing to gather out of his Kingdom the offenders: yet both expressions cover the same events. The "wheat" have always been the heirs of the Kingdom--the "tares" have never been such, tho both have grown side by side throughout this Gospel age. In the *past* the "tares" have at least nominally professed to be "wheat"--professed faith in our Lord's Word and in his *redemptive* work. But *now*, under divine providence, they are being led of their error to repudiate the "wheat" altogether--as "non-critical, old fogies."

They have abandoned both the *Book* and the *Blood* --not in word, but actually, logically. It is to all a test of *standing*, of holding to the anchorage of faith or of being blown by the winds of worldly wisdom, called "higher criticism," far, far away from our Savior and his inspired Word.

Really, then, the "tares" *leave* the "wheat," by utterly abandoning the faith once delivered to the saints. Thus God gathers them out of or away from his Kingdom class. But, since the latter are a minority, they must leave the meeting-houses to the majority, who thus carry them with them "out of his Kingdom," to be places of musical and literary entertainment instead of places for worship and for hearing the Word of the Lord and for renewal of vows.

The minority must leave the *organizations* of Babylon also--in order to be faithful to their Lord and his Word and to "show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light." This at first seems a trial--until we learn the difference between human organizations and the divine organization, and that the former never were instituted nor authorized by our Lord or his apostles; and that none of them ever were connected with any such human organizations; and that to leave the human organizations is [R2545 : page 276] merely to leave a "tare" institution of the long ago and has no bearing whatever on the *real organization* of which we still remain members, with our names written in heaven--in the Lamb's Book of Life.--[Heb. 12:23](#); [Rev. 13:8](#).

DOCTOR DE COSTA'S LETTER TO BISHOP POTTER.

Doctor DeCosta, in withdrawing from a church where he found the friends of the Savior and the Bible in a hopeless minority, wrote a letter to the Bishop of his diocese, setting forth some of his reasons: and very properly he made public the contents of the letter;-- otherwise his reasons for his action might have been misunderstood by some of his friends and misrepresented by some not his friends. And a similar privilege and duty presents itself to *all* who withdraw from any division of Babylon.*

We give liberal extracts from Dr. DeCosta's letter, believing that it will be of general interest to God's people, and well knowing that not only the religious, but also the secular press will be loth to give it much notice. The truth, let us remember, never has been popular with the world, and the "tare" influence, direct and indirect, is generally sufficient to either exclude such like matter or to ridicule it as "superstitious and cranky." The extracts follow:--

"New York, Oct. 7th, 1899.

The Rt. Rev. HENRY CODMAN POTTER, D.D., LL.D.,

Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Diocese of New York:--

"DEAR SIR:--I hereby respectfully resign the office of Presbyter.

"It is proper for me to give some reason for this course, which, at the end of long years of service, is adopted deliberately and in the fear of God. I must now, however, confine myself to a few points. In what I have to say at this time I desire to speak with entire plainness, as well as with kindness and respect; while, to avoid any possible misapprehension, I would add that I do not resign on account of any personal grievance.

"I cannot reconcile my convictions with the present condition of the Episcopal Church, which, contrary to its own principles, has been drawn into the adoption of a policy of toleration toward a school of theology and Biblical criticism which in my judgment is hostile to revealed truth.

"Further permit me to say respectfully that I do not find that you have been 'ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away from the church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word;' while much less have you seemed inclined 'both privately and openly to call upon and encourage others to do the same.'

"On the contrary, I think the testimony proves that you have discouraged and baffled men inclined to take such action. I do not, however, undertake to impugn your motives or charge upon you the 'lamentable ignorance' and deliberate 'malice' which some time since in the public press you attributed to men by no means your inferiors either in learning or charity. I desire, nevertheless, to indicate that, as I view the subject, whatever may have been your own views, you have acted with and defended those who have struck at the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the plenary inspired and infallible Word of God.

DOUBT SPREADING RAPIDLY.

"The progress of doubt during the last few years is most notable. If Newman had lived in our day, he would hardly have been able to write that beautiful eulogy of the Bible in which he says of the Englishman that 'It is the representative of his best moments,' and that 'all that there has been about him of soft, and gentle, and pure, and penitent, and good, speaks to him forever out of his English Bible. It is his sacred thing which doubt has never seen and controversy never soiled.' Even in Episcopal seminaries the inerrancy of Holy

Scripture is boldly and systematically denied.

"You, right reverend sir, have entered the field at a crucial hour, plainly declaring that the system of denial or negation embodied in the 'higher criticism' forms an allowable method of interpretation, and that the acceptance of the methods and its conclusions does not disqualify candidates for the ministry. You have therefore deliberately received into the denomination, and you have approved as proper teachers for the people, men who declare that the Scriptures are errant and do not form an infallible guide, but abound in myths, fables, scientific and historical errors.

"The long catalogue of errors credited by so-called 'higher criticism' to Holy Scripture may or may not in your estimation appear as trifles. That, however, has nothing to do with the present issue, but the system that you vouch for as within the liberty of clergymen leaves, in my judgment, no sufficient authority for the Christian religion. We are plainly told that 'The prevalent dogmatic theories of the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible have been undermined in the entire range of Biblical study, and it is a question in many minds whether they can ever be so reconstructed as to give satisfaction to Christian scholars.'

"The worst is that the church approves your course. Future candidates may openly deride the story of Pentecost as the world has understood it from the time of the apostles.

*We have prepared what we term *Withdrawal Letters* for the use of our friends. They are printed in typewriter type, and in kind but clear and forceful language explain some of the reasons moving to the withdrawal. You merely need to sign, date and mail these to the pastor and all members of the sect you have been *bound* to, and at once you are free. We supply these *free*, accompanied by missionary envelopes and tracts-- enough to supply every member of the congregation one. Order a *sample one* first and see if it will suit you--then send for required quantity. These "Withdrawal Letters" should be sent out as soon as possible after you decide on regaining the *liberty* wherewith Christ hath made free his people. Every day or month or year that passes before sending them is a distinct disadvantage to *you* and to the *truth*: both are sure to be misrepresented by an informal withdrawal. You joined not the minister, but the congregation,--not secretly, but publicly; and your withdrawal should be after the same manner. [R2546 : page 277]

"The former belief in the Bible is no longer required. Candidates of the school to which I refer will indeed continue to sign papers, agreeing to accept the Scriptures as the Word of God, but such subscriptions practically will prove little better than perjury.

"The phrase 'Word of God' is now a phrase only; its meaning has been juggled away.

"'Higher criticism' has struck every diocese in the land, and from all the States in the Union there is coming a wild, ungovernable flood of opinion and sentiment that renders your position still more significant. You do not stand alone. You are upborne by the power of unconsecrated wealth. Your Convention, which has just closed its session, is with you, having overwhelmingly vindicated your *laissez faire* Standing Committee by indorsing its dark act. Your examiners give unqualified support. Thus far the case is diocesan; but venerable and saintly men like the Bishop of Minnesota, men of superior judgment and influence, applaud the 'wisdom and good sense' displayed in this phase of your administration, while the criminal silence of other Bishops speaks louder than words.

"The press, being creedless, is, for the most part, with you, and hails you as the exponent of incoming 'liberal thought.' A leading editorial, in a prominent daily, describing present society as one that 'has outlived the faith of dogma,' claims that your position is 'invincible.' Humanly speaking, it is indeed secure. The masses of Episcopalians are with you.

"I can understand why the Bishop of Western Texas is obliged to admit:--'We know that the young men are not in the churches and the laboring classes are entirely alienated.' The president of your Standing Committee has just reported to Convention that the youth of the denomination 'deny any obligation to go to church. They go if they please, but if not, it makes no difference.'

"Indeed, what have they to go for? To listen to the reading of what preachers pronounce myths and fables. Substantially, the battle for the Bible has been fought. The case is lost, and now you can present no inducements for either youth or age to go to church. By a town meeting process the Bible has been declared 'literature.'

"This new relation of your denomination to the Bible changes the relation of the denomination to other religious bodies, and never again can Episcopalians approach the Presbyterians calling to union on the basis of a common Bible.

"Unbelief is in the air. Indeed, I must here call attention to the fact, as yet little noticed, that the worst of the prevailing scepticism does not appear in print, nor even in public addresses. In private not a few of both clergy and laity openly repudiate the authority of Bible and creed, using no concealment.

"One very prominent rector, who stands high in the ranks of your supporters, speaks of the New Testament as a bundle of *left over* documents. Another has declared that the *first three chapters of St. Matthew* form simply a beautiful legend; while another ridicules even the Apostles' Creed. Important positions are held by men of this class, who remain in the pulpit to win present bread or accomplish ulterior ends.

THE ONLY WAY.

"Evils have been pointed out privately to the bishops, and the pessimistic reply of one, 'Things will never be any better in your day or mine,' may be accepted as the expression of nearly all. Letters in my possession from some of your associates in office form instructive reading. For myself, recognizing the situation as I do, there is but one course; and, therefore, whatever other men, whom personally I esteem, may do, and however they may regard their obligations, mine seem clear.

"While no action on your part could lead me to go out, I recognize a condition that no one man, or any possible combination of men, can now successfully meet. The Episcopalian scheme, based on private judgment, is not only far overshadowed by doubt that will characterize the incoming twentieth century, but it is possessed by the unbelieving spirit. The storm is already here, but the Protestant Episcopal body has no anchors. The future is clear. Your people are hastening to accomplish *their evolution*. Few will be misled by the pompous diction of that bishop who in his last charge foretells great victories. Fewer still, allow me to say with all kindness, will be persuaded by your own phraseology, where you speak of 'the Book' as 'incomparable and precious,' since it is commonly believed that many churchmen would not now disdain such language if applied to the works of Shakespeare and Homer.

"One can very well anticipate the reply of men who, with *assumed indignation*, deny that they refuse the *Bible as the Word of God*, but discerning persons know the value of phrases out of which the erstwhile faith, robustness and honesty have departed.

A REMARKABLE DISCOVERY.

"You charge that 'a modern fetichism which has dishonored the Bible by claiming to be its elect guardian has shut it up these many years within the iron walls of a dreary literalism, robbing it thus alike of interest and of power.' You have furnished a remarkable discovery. All along the people have regarded the Bible as a free book. It has stood, the pride and glory of the nations, accredited with the uplifting of society and the advance of civilization and modern thought. No language has been found too superb in describing its work of

emancipation and purification.

"Now, however, you assure us that we have been mistaken, that all the while the Bible has been shut up within iron walls, robbed of interest and power. Do you, right reverend sir, suppose that the people of the land, who have organized Bible societies and carried them on at a large cost for many years, are sufficiently ignorant of the history and influence of the Bible to accept tamely this charge? Your language is astonishing! I deeply deplore the necessity which exists for saying this, yet you are winning laurels among infidels far and wide.

"The particular kind of usefulness that your criticism may aspire to is indicated by the language of one of your own friends, the Bishop of Washington, who declares that, 'under the influence of the "higher criticism" thousands have lost their faith in the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God;' while 'the faith of multitudes is so shaken that even Sunday school children [R2546 : page 278] speak of the Scriptures with an irreverent freedom that would have amazed the preceding generation.'

"One may, therefore, safely dismiss your statement where you speak of what 'a higher scholarship has done for us in our generation *for the advancement of godliness and good learning* throughout the Christian world.' It is, on the contrary, driving people away from the religion of Christ.

"Furthermore, it might be remembered with profit that Christianity was never designed to entertain any comparative religions, and the system you applaud can only degrade the Episcopal denomination to a plan where the maintenance of the simplest elements of Christianity will prove impossible. As for your own diocese, the central and most important, when its actual state is known, it will be seen that it is rapidly approaching the condition of the bloodless heart. Spiritually your strongest corporation is failing. The appearance of prosperity, as the statistics prove, is unreal. As things are tending, far sighted friends say that if the Cathedral is ever finished it will prove the sarcophagus of Episcopalianism, the coffin of its creed. It is to be devoutly hoped that the policy with which you are identified may yet be paralyzed.

"For myself I cannot bow to the guidance of the 'distinguished critics' whom you have set forth as teachers and examples for the faculties in Episcopal seminaries, masters in Israel--who now, side by side with the professional infidel, stand forth to lecture on the 'Mistakes of Moses.' My sense of right would not support me in any such course. I retire from the field, convinced that I am no longer called to struggle with an overwhelming and rapidly increasing force. I cannot accept the revolution or drift with the tide. Your school is indeed benevolent, and quite willing to tolerate catholic faith, bestowing upon it from time to time nothing more severe than ignoble terms. But for myself I ask no favors. I will not remain where doubt commands a premium, and the belief in an infallible Bible enjoys simply the immunity granted to a fallible Koran." --
From *The New York Herald*.

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DR. DE COSTA'S PARADOXICAL POSITION.

At first it would appear paradoxical, if not absurd, that the gentleman who poses as a defender of the Bible in the language quoted foregoing, should conclude that the same honesty which led him to protest against the Protestant Episcopal communion as deserters of the Bible, led him into the Roman Catholic Church as the communion of the Bible's friends with whom alone he could find fellowship. Yet this is the Doctor's position: and in harmony with it he was received into the Roman Catholic Church on Sunday, Dec. 4. He has since published his reasons for the step, from which we extract as follows:--

"I do not, however, propose to offer any apology for entering the Catholic Church. Standing in the midst of

modern religious systems, toppling to their fall like columns in the temple of Karnak, no defense need be offered for accepting a firm and unshaken Catholic faith. ...The Church of Rome stands before the English speaking people and Protestants everywhere as the [R2547 : page 278] unique and solitary defender of the Bible in its integrity and entirety."

Dr. De Costa denies that the authorities of the Catholic Church are unfavorable to the circulation and use of the Bible, saying that it is the duty and privilege of Catholic scholars to study the Bible thoroughly in the original tongues. The gentleman must consider the Latin *the original tongue*, for surely it is it that is chiefly, almost exclusively, studied by Romanist priests,-- or rather compiled and arranged extracts from the Latin New Testament and not the book itself.

The Doctor concludes thus:--

"On the Protestant theory there is no visible Church, the only body being a mystical body in the air. On this theory Christianity has failed; the empire that triumphed over the Roman empire has perished. This is simply pessimism resumed. Reformation, religionism, therefore offers no moral or intellectual outlook for coming generations, and leaves the world forced at last to choose between rationalism and the Catholic Church. I believe in the Holy Catholic Church and the life everlasting."

Poor Doctor, he must have our sympathy, if we give him credit for candor and love for God's Word; and we believe there are many in his position. He sees inconsistencies on both sides of the question and has jumped from one horn of his dilemma to the other, instead of escaping from both. Thus:--

(1) Dr. De Costa has forced himself to forget that for centuries Papacy has been the implacable foe of the Bible; that she has officially through her popes (claimed to be infallible) cursed the Bible Societies and denounced their work as of the devil; that she has caused Bibles circulated among the people to be gathered and publicly burned-- "*auto da fe*."

He cannot be ignorant of the fact--and hence he must merely close his eyes to it, and try to forget--that Papacy's advocacy of the Bible and permission of the people to have it and to read it is but a recent move (within the last ten years), and that only in the United States, and hedged about with certain restrictions governed by the priests and from translations containing Roman Catholic comments as footnotes. The Doctor utterly ignores the fact that Papacy has not really changed--boasts that she never changes,--and hence is no more the friend of the Bible than she was during the "dark ages," but merely appears to advocate the Bible so as to disarm suspicion and to gain the good will of the most enlightened nation in the world. He forces himself to forget that the portions of "Christendom" where the Bible is free and in the vernacular of the people are the most enlightened and the most Protestant --The United States, Great Britain, Norway, [R2547 : page 279] Sweden, Germany, Switzerland: and that the dark places of superstition and cruelty are the places where Papacy has persistently hindered the circulation of the Bible-- Spain, Portugal, Italy, Southern Ireland, and as far as possible France and Austro-Hungary, Mexico and the South American countries. Well does Papacy know that the Bible--"the sword of the spirit," the Word of God, is her greatest foe: and she will never be its supporter and defender, except as a pretense,--even as Satan would pose as an angel of light instead of a prince of darkness to accomplish his purposes.

(2) Having blinded himself on the above point the Doctor seeks to account for the Reformation movement as *not* being to secure a free Bible as the true light upon the Church's pathway. On the other hand he declares it was a mistaken effort to repudiate the *visible church* and to recognize it only as a *spiritual body*.

Would to God the Doctor told the truth in this statement! Would to God all Protestants (and Romanists too) recognized the Scriptural teaching that the Church of Christ is *not an earthly* organization with names upon sectarian rolls of membership, but instead is a heavenly union and communion "whose names are written in

heaven"--"in the Lamb's Book of Life." ([Heb. 12:23](#); [Rev. 13:8](#).) But alas! the Doctor is as much mistaken in this as in his other proposition, for Protestants as well as Romanists have *earthly* organizations and honor these as the *true* Church, and do not see that they are "Babylonish"--confused mixtures in which "wheat" and "tares" commingle--the "tares" predominating and consequently ruling.

Erring on both these points, Dr. De Costa has gone from bad to worse--from one bad "tare" bundle to another containing still less "wheat." Oh, how many of God's people are confused, bewildered, and ensnared thus and otherwise! Only the meek, the humble, will go earnestly to God and be taught of him and be led out of all human entanglements and bondages into the liberty wherewith the Son of God makes *free* his sheep.

EVOLUTION AMONG THE BAPTISTS.

In evidence that the latest and worst form of Infidelity is permeating all denominations, all colleges and seminaries, note the following just clipped from the Rochester, N.Y., *Post-Express*:--

"President A. H. Strong delivered last evening at the Rochester Theological Seminary an address on 'The Growth of Theological Thought During the Last Fifty Years.' Dr. Strong took advanced ground, accepting fully the theory of Evolution and approving the methods and general results of the higher criticism."

The Rochester Baptist Seminary is the principal one of that denomination in the United States and furnishes its most prominent ministers.

THE METHODISTS ALSO DISTRACTED.

The Boston Morning Journal of Dec. 8th announced as the leading news of its first page--

"NINE STUDENTS QUIT BOSTON UNIVERSITY."

It then quotes the statement of one of the students, Schenk by name, as follows:--

"Coming from the West to Boston University School of Theology a year ago, I was shocked to find the most rabid rationalism being taught as Old Testament exegesis, under cover of a leading Methodist school. Coming to Messianic prophecy, only half a truth was taught. Further on Jesus Christ was no authority on Old Testament Scripture. The miraculous conception was set aside and the atoning blood made non-essential."

The worst of the matter is yet to be told, namely, that Prof. Mitchell is heartily endorsed by the other professors of the institution and by nearly all the students of the seminary--the soon-to-be preachers of Methodism; for the President of the institution says that the dissenters are only "eight or nine out of an aggregate of 178 students."

It seems, too, that the seceders appealed to the Board of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, but got no redress but on the contrary; as a result the students who protested against the decimation of the Book and the rejection of the precious blood were notified that they must be quiet on the subject. Thereupon they nobly withdrew.

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So the leaven of error is rapidly permeating every branch of the nominal church, and the tests are coming to

each individual Christian to prove him either "wheat" or "tare." The "wheat," today as of old, will be counted "fools for Christ's sake" by the worldly-wise. --[1 Cor. 4:10](#).

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