

A NEW FAITH OR RENEWED CONFIDENCE IN THE OLD FAITH?

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The Bible is unreliable, it must be edited, reinterpreted and rewritten before we can trust it. Every error (we are told they're on every page), myth, falsified history, skewed narrative and fictitious person must be identified, reinterpreted or excised, so we can know without a shadow of doubt, that nothing but undiluted truth remains. This is the new faith now being delivered to the saints. And just who, may we ask, is competent to perform this task and thereby earn the Bible believing Christian's confidence and respect?

Before we answer that question, it is well to understand what is being proposed. This new faith is entirely intellectual, rationalistic and humanistic. It is driven by its belief in the evolutionary origin and process of life. Everything that does not conform to this presupposition must be adjusted to it. Evolution is *the* 'Gospel' and human reason its handmaiden, therefore man's reason alone is qualified to be the final judge of all human knowledge, truth and experience.

According to this 'gospel' life began by chance. Which, by the way, is the belief that non-intelligent matter collaborated with itself to produce intelligent life. This new faith is purely naturalistic. According to its holiest creed, nothing happens outside of cause and effect; which simply means that we live in a closed universe where science alone is capable of discovering truth through its sacred methodology.

When this philosophical outlook is applied to the Bible it reduces the Bible to a book of human construction containing nothing more than a few good moral lessons. But, we are told, before we can know what these morals are, the Bible must be reconstructed by human experts who are adequately qualified for the job. On the authority of these new apostles, the text of the Bible is proclaimed corrupt, its history false and many of its characters fictitious. In other words, as it now stands, the Bible is completely unreliable, the product of human error and deliberate deception.

These experts insist the Bible must be reconstructed because its authors, many of them are called *redactors* (unknown editors whom even the experts can't identify), were either mistaken in their facts or in how they arranged them, or they deliberately set out to deceive their audience by falsifying the records.

The task of the self appointed apostles of this new faith is to set the record straight for us. And they are not shy in telling us that without their specialized knowledge, expertise and assistance, we would all be left completely in the dark. These new apostles therefore assume to be the supreme authority in all matters of Christian faith. In fact, according to them, they have already accomplished this task and now expect our

undying gratitude for freeing us from bondage to the false ideas of Christianity which we've imbibed through a corrupted and unreliable Bible. (We'd like to know if sometime in the future, they also intend to straighten out the Koran or any other venerated religious writings.) But for now, it seems that the Christian Bible is what really troubles them.

A prime example of their reconstructive ingenuity is the JEDP theory, which someone has said is now on life support. These experts say they have determined on the basis of the usage of the different names of God found in the first six books of the Bible, (they've replaced the Pentateuch with the so-called 'Hexateuch'), that Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua were drawn up from four different documents viz. Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist and the so-called Priestly Code.

On the basis of so-called internal evidence of these six books, we are told that various documents were drawn up between the 9th and 5th centuries BC and not in the 15th century BC as previously held. In other words they were all post-exilic writings, and could never have been written by Moses because writing came into being much later than Moses. Furthermore, these documents are supposed to represent different Hebrew traditions and are not only incomplete, but also at odds with each other in important matters. The theory of how the final JEDP document came into existence is a masterful weaving together of (not so) masterful speculative imagination.

These scholars brush aside as mere fancy the idea that Moses (if he ever existed) could have authored these documents. That's because they believed that writing was a later development which discounted that possibility. However, when archaeology discovered the famous code of Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, who lived about the time of Abraham, it disproved their assumption. But they did a smart about turn and said that Moses (the non-existent one) must have copied his laws from Hammurabi. This leaves us with two non-existent people named Moses, one who was illiterate and another who was literate.

They replaced Moses with a series of unknown redactors (between 9, 10, 18 and 22 unknown editors) plucked from nowhere, who, for reasons known only to themselves, at various times compiled and re-hacked this material until, JEDP was the final result. But according to our learned scholars, the redactors (all 9, 10, 18 or 22 of them), did a very bad job of it; they all got it horribly wrong and failed writing 101. Some were simply confused, while others deliberately wove a web of deception. That this is likely what happened, the new apostles tell us, is probably beyond dispute.

Yet our critics can't even agree on their conclusions about this so-called disputable material. Their conclusions range from "usually true though partly mythical and legendary"; "The miracles recorded were exaggerations of a later age." "woven from the raw material of myth and legend" and "not historical", to "extremely probable that the stories of the Patriarchs have at the heart of them historical elements." Despite

these differences, we are assured that the results of their scholarship is beyond question. Which results do they mean? And what evidence exactly puts their conclusions beyond dispute? As one scholar who begs to differ with them has remarked, “There is no evidence of the existence of these documents and redactors, and no pretense (*sic*) of any, apart from the critical tests which have determined the analysis.”

The apostles of this new faith have been challenged to apply this same methodology in analyzing and correctly identifying the various sources and different authors which make up the Anglican Prayer Book, a composite production, put together over centuries; while historians know their identities, the Prayer Book itself does not identify who contributed what material. Besides this, the Prayer Book is written in English (not in Hebrew), which should make their task easier. Yet strangely, no one from their camp (that we know of) has stepped forward to answer the challenge.

In one foul swoop, these ‘teachers’ have brushed aside divine inspiration, divine authority and the credibility of the Bible. Last but not least, they make our Lord Jesus Christ out to be untrustworthy either through ignorance or deliberate deception, and thereby strip Him of all authority as a teacher of the truth. All this is replaced with their own dogmatic, unproven, ungodly ideas, which have become the new orthodoxy; the new faith once and for all time delivered to the saints. These scholars, who themselves refuse to believe in the idea of an infallible Bible, make themselves infallible guides in all matters of faith.

Reputable scholars from the opposing side have concluded that the JEDP documents and their redactors are imaginary. That the theory of evolution applied to literature and religion is unnaturally forced. That the Bible is thereby made a mere human production. And by holding to a naturalistic worldview, there can be no such thing as miracle. They furthermore assert that the testimony of archaeology is blatantly denied, twisted or simply ignored. The Bible is cut and pasted, edited and rearranged to suit the presuppositions of a naturalistic worldview. As seekers after truth, we find this attitude untruthful, unreasonable, arrogant, ignorant and tragic.

But this new faith has much to answer for, because it has blocked up the fountain of the water of life with the muck of its unbelief and arrogance. It prevents those who would enter life from knowing that the door to life (Christ) even exists.

This new faith has no place for sin, repentance, forgiveness, faith, salvation, miracles, a saving Christ, a cross of redemption, the peace of God that passes all understanding, the brotherhood and sisterhood of believers, judgment or eternity. It begins and ends with humanity. According to its rational conclusions, we are born, live and die, end of story.

Compare this with the old faith which runs something like this. The Bible is divinely inspired and free from error regarding its assessment of humanity, its revelation of God, Christ and God’s only method of salvation.

It paints a dismal picture of humanity, who is created in God's image, but rebelled against God's authority and spurned His love by going their own way. Despite this, God the Father sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to die for humanities' sin and rise from the dead in order to break our connection with sin, and provide a way (the only way) for us to enter into holy fellowship with Himself through His Holy Spirit.

We do not need a new faith, what we need is renewed confidence in the old faith. As John plainly states, *"Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book. But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."* (John 20:30-31)

In Revelation. 22:18-19 John sounds a clear warning to our scholarly critics. *"If anyone adds to the words (of the book), God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book. If anyone takes away from the words of the book, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city which are written in this book."*