

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

Hildebrand. The volumes are larger than Longmans' 'Epoch' series, nearer the size of Unwin's *Story of the Nations*; large enough to give a fair account of the periods they cover, not too large to alarm or weary a rapidly-reading public.

To the student of Hebrew, one of the most welcome promises is a translation of the latest edition of Gesenius' *Grammar*. The translator is Mr. Cowley. It comes from the Clarendon Press also. In reference to translations, it may be noted, that in an article in the *Greifswalder Studien*, Dr. Haussleiter speaks of Sanday and Headlam's *Romans*, and expresses the hope that the volume will soon be translated into German. The German commentators have given us many, it is something to know that they will accept this in return.

Dr. Cave's *Introduction to Theology* has been out of print for some time. He has revised it thoroughly, and brought it up to date. No book fills the place so satisfactorily.

If any demand is felt for lectures and lantern slides on Palestine, Egypt, or the like, Mr. Lyle's may be commended. The choice of subject seems thoroughly judicious. As for a Map of Palestine, nothing can touch the Raised Map by Mr. Armstrong published by the Palestine Exploration Fund.

From Far Formosa, probably the best missionary book of last season, has passed into a third edition. And now Messrs. Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier have just issued in uniform binding, *A Cycle of Cathay*, by Dr. W. A. P. Martin.

Jean Astruc.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. A. R. S. KENNEDY, D.D., EDINBURGH.

OF the works that figure in every history of Pentateuch criticism, none is so frequently mentioned and so little known as Jean Astruc's famous *Conjectures*.¹ This is mainly due to the fact that for reasons to be stated in due course remarkably few copies of the book are now in existence. Thus, in the catalogues of two of our greatest libraries, the Bodleian and the library of Trinity College, Dublin, the book is conspicuous by its absence, and many of the continental libraries are understood to be in no better case. As for Astruc himself, although in his day a medical specialist and writer of world-wide reputation, he is little more to the man of average education to-day than if he had been a 'minor prophet.' In these circumstances it may not be inappropriate to recall the outstanding features of Astruc's career, while a brief sketch of the contents of his *Conjectures* may be welcomed by many students to whom the original is inaccessible. For it is as the author of this epoch-making work that Jean Astruc is now chiefly, if not solely, remembered, a fact which gives a curious interest to an estimate formed of

it in the early part of the present century. Thus in Rees' *Cyclopædia*, vol. iii., 1819, we read under ASTRUC (John, M.D.): 'One very singular work, little noticed, and perhaps little deserving notice, founded solely on speculation and conjecture, was his *Conjectures*, etc. Bruxelles, 1759' (*sic*).

I.

Jean Astruc² came of a good Protestant family of the province of Languedoc, in the south of France. Born on the 19th of March 1684, at the little town of Sauve, where his father was a minister of the gospel, Jean was baptized in the Protestant temple there. Astruc père, however, was not of the stuff that martyrs are made of, for

² The authorities for the following sketch are (1) the short autobiography which occupies page 293 of Astruc's posthumous work, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier* (Paris, 1767), and (2) the *Éloge historique de M. Astruc* prefixed to this work by its editor, M. Anne Charles Lorry, himself a *savant* of note and a former pupil of Astruc (pp. i-iii). It also appeared in the *Journal des Sçavans* of date October 1767, pp. 291 ff. Lorry's *Éloge* is the main source of the articles on A. in such works as the following:—*Bibliothèque littéraire, historique et critique de la Médecine, etc.*, par M. J. F. Carrère, Paris, 1786, tome i. pp. 226-228, with analysis of A.'s works, pp. 228-238; *Encyclopédie Méthodique—Médecine*, Paris, 1790, t. i., pp. 374-382; *Jourdan's Biographie Médicale*, Paris, 1820, t. i., pp. 394-403; *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique des Sciences Médicales*, t. vii., Astruc (Jean); *Biographie Universelle, etc.*, t. ii., Paris, 1843, pp. 592 ff.

¹ The full title runs thus:—*Conjectures sur les Mémoires Originaux Dont il paroît que Moÿse s'est servi pour composer le Livre de la Genèse. Avec des Remarques, qui appuient ou qui éclaircissent ces Conjectures.* [Latin Motto.] *A Bruxelles, Chez Fricx, Imprimeur de Sa Majesté, vis-à-vis l'Église de la Madeleine. M, DCC, LIII. Avec Privilège & Approbation.*

he 'verted immediately before the revocation of the famous edict of Nantes. Adopting avowedly the profession of advocate, he in reality devoted himself to the study of philosophy and the education of his two sons, of whom Jean was the elder. He appears to have been a man of considerable culture, 'with an exact knowledge of the sacred tongues,' and a love for antiquity inherited by his more famous son. The latter, we are told, like Horace, blessed every day the memory of his father, from whom he confessed to have learned the secret of order and method to which he attributed much of his success in the study of the sciences.

From this excellent school Jean Astruc proceeded to the University of Montpellier, where he took his M.A. in 1700. Two years later, he received the degree of Bachelor of Medicine. The same year, 1702, saw the first of a stately series of publications on medicine, physics, antiquities, metaphysics, and theology. This was a short treatise giving the results of his investigations into the nature of effervescence. In 1703 he proceeded to the doctorate; but instead of at once commencing to practise, Astruc chose to devote himself to the scientific side of his profession, particularly to what we should nowadays call medical physics. After seven years of close study, during three of which (1707-1709) he acted as Deputy-Professor of Anatomy, he gave to the world his *Dissertatio physica de motu musculari*, 1710, a work which at once placed Astruc among the foremost investigators of the time. In the same year he obtained by competition the chair of anatomy in the neighbouring University of Toulouse, but, by his own avowal, his heart was still with his *Alma Mater*, and in 1715 he returned to be colleague and successor (if so we may render the original: *en qualité de survivancier*) to the Professor of Anatomy at Montpellier. Soon thereafter he became full Professor. The years that followed were years of successful academic work, fruitful research, and growing fame. Substantial recognition came in the shape of a Government appointment and a royal pension. The new theories of the young *savant* met with considerable opposition in many quarters, which led to a good deal of controversial writing on Astruc's part, in the course of which he crossed swords with several of our Scottish doctors, including such luminaries as Archibald Pitcairne of Edinburgh University, and the then Professor of Mathematics in Aberdeen,

Thomas Bower, M.D.¹ Astruc took a leading part also in the controversy, which was then at its height, between the physicians and the surgeons, his sympathies being entirely with the former.

A visit which Astruc paid to Paris in 1728, mainly for purposes of research, proved an epoch in his career, inasmuch as it led to his resignation of his chair at Montpellier, and his acceptance of the honourable position of first physician to Augustus II., King of Poland. The atmosphere of the Court, however, was not congenial to one of Astruc's independence of thought and action, and in a short time, under the pretext of urgent family business, he returned to Paris, where the second half of his long life was spent. In 1730 he was appointed consulting physician to the King (Louis xv.), and in the following year reached the summit of his ambition by being nominated Professor of Medicine in the Collège Royale de France. The only incident of importance in the following years, from a professional point of view, was his admission by *co-optation* into the very exclusive ranks of 'the noble Faculty of Medicine of Paris' (26th September 1743).² This honour was in part a recognition of the valuable service rendered by Astruc to the Faculty of Physicians in their legal process against the Surgeons, in the shape of five letters,³ which, according to M. Lorry, helped the Faculty to gain the case in the French Parliament. For nearly a quarter of a century Jean Astruc continued to be a star of the first magnitude in the Paris Faculty, then, as now, one of the most brilliant Faculties of Europe.

Some years before his admission to the Faculty, Astruc had completed and published the work which, more than any other of his numerous scientific publications, was the foundation of his world-wide reputation, namely, *De morbis veneris libri sex*, Paris, 1735. Several enlarged editions followed, and the work was at once translated into English, French, and other European tongues. For a complete list of Astruc's writings, the curious reader is referred to the works cited at the head of this article. Of the anonymous

¹ See *Epistola Joannis Astruc, quibus respondetur epistolari dissertationi Thomæ Boëri de concoctione*, 1715.

² A graphic sketch of the impressive ceremony of admission is given by M. Chéreau in the *Dict. encycl. des sciences médicales*, tome vii. pp. 31 ff.

³ On these see: *Lettres sur les disputes, . . . et sur le droit qu'a M. Astruc d'entrer dans ces disputes . . .* par M. * * * [François Quesnay], Chirurgien de Rouen, 1737.

Conjectures and its fate, we shall have more to say presently. After a long and laborious life as a teacher, physician, and writer, Astruc died on the 5th of May 1766, at the age of eighty-two. Before leaving Montpellier he had married Damoiselle Jeanne Chaunel. A son and a daughter were the fruit of this marriage; the former rose to a high legal position in Paris, and survived his father, while the latter predeceased him by a year.

On Astruc's claim to be remembered by posterity as a medical specialist and historian, it is for others more qualified to pronounce an opinion. That he was at least an indefatigable worker is certain both from the long list of his writings, some of them evidencing an almost unparalleled acquaintance with the history of medical science,¹ and from the statement of his biographer, that 'even in advanced life he was often found studying till 3 A.M. without fire, and by the light of a lamp alone' (*Éloge*, p. xlvi). As a teacher also, both at Montpellier and at Paris, he was extremely popular,² attracting students, even as a young man, from far and near. 'I have seen strangers,' remarks his eulogist, 'after they had heard the greatest professors of the schools of Holland and Germany, perfectly astonished at the force of M. Astruc's arguments, and the graces of his style; and many people, to whom medicine was uninteresting, listened to his lectures as models of good Latinity.' According to the same authority, Astruc was 'a happy father, a faithful and zealous friend, who nevertheless gave but few moments to his children and his friends' (*op. cit.* p. li), so engrossed was he in his scientific and literary work. Keen controversialist though he was to the end, yet his mode of argument had none of that 'rustic ferocity which renders the truth itself odious and unsupportable.' Although necessarily called by his profession to mix much with the dissolute society that then aped but too successfully the licentiousness of the Court, there is no good reason for doubting that Astruc was at heart other than we find him in his works, a sincere and indefatigable seeker after truth, both in nature and in revelation.³

¹ Even his bitterest opponents acknowledge his immense erudition, see Quesnay, *op. cit.*

² 'Il était Professeur par goût et par nature' (Lorry).

³ In the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* for January 1892, Professor Osgood has attempted, on the evidence of the malicious and mendacious gossip of the period, to make

II.

To the student of the history of Old Testament criticism, Jean Astruc is of interest solely as the author of the work which now demands our attention, the once 'little noticed' *Conjectures*. Regarding its publication, we may once more quote the words of his friend and biographer: 'It was only when he perceived himself advanced in years that he felt entitled to give to the public a work which he had long thought over, and which has been received by the learned with applause. This work is his *Conjectures regarding the Original Memoirs which Moses appears to have made use of in the Composition of the Book of Genesis*. Certain scruples kept him back. He was himself quite clear as to his motives; but he was afraid that certain freethinkers (*esprits forts*) might fancy themselves in a position to draw from his *Conjectures* certain conclusions adverse to the divinity of the sacred books. He required to be reassured for a long period by pious and well-informed persons before giving forth this work, which is only curious without being dangerous, and which M. l'Abbé Fleury had already held to be possible. But at the same time he made haste to publish two dissertations on the immortality and immateriality of the soul as a guarantee of his faith.' The essays in question appeared in 1755. With these remarks of his friend, we may compare the words which Astruc himself has prefixed to his *Conjectures*. 'This work—so runs the *Avertissement*—was composed some time ago, but I hesitated to publish it, fearing that the would-be freethinkers (*les prétendus Esprits-forts*) . . . might make a wrong use of it to diminish the authority of the Pentateuch.' On being assured, however, that so far from this being the case, his results, 'far from being prejudicial to religion, could, on the contrary, be only of advantage to it, inasmuch as they helped to remove or at least to illuminate various difficulties which present themselves to the reader of Genesis,' he determined to publish the work. 'I protest in advance very sincerely,' he concludes, 'that if those who have a right to decide in these matters, and whose decisions I ought to respect, find my conjectures false or

out that Jean Astruc was a rake and villain of the deepest dye! The ultra-Protestant and ultra-conservative bias of the writer is only less conspicuous than his one-sided treatment of the evidence.

dangerous, I am ready to abandon them, or, to speak more correctly, I abandon them from this moment. Never shall fondness (*prévention*) for my own ideas prevail with me over the love of truth and religion.' Is this, we ask, the language of a man who undertakes, of set purpose, 'the denial of the supernatural in the Bible,' a man whose life has been so infamous that he is afraid to 'face death' unless he first prove that 'the Bible is not supernatural,' and that, therefore, 'there would be no fear from it for a man of Astruc's life'? (Osgood, *loc. cit.*)

Those who know how dangerous it was, even in those days, to deviate from the beaten path of the Church's teaching in matters of religion will be the last to blame Astruc for the device which he adopted in publishing the *Conjectures* with the fictitious title-page reproduced above. The work appeared neither at Brussels nor 'with privilege and approbation,' but anonymously at Paris in 1753.¹ The authorship of the book did not long remain a secret, as we know from a notable in-

¹ See Weller, *Dictionnaire des ouvrages français portant de fausses indications des lieux d'impression et des imprimeurs*, etc., Leipzig, 1864 (= vol. ii. of *Die falschen und fingirten Druckorte*).

cident which took place a few years later. Astruc's only daughter, Anne Jeanne Antoinette, was married in 1745 to Étienne de Silhouette, afterwards Louis xv.'s famous but short-lived Minister of Finance (March to November 1759). When Silhouette was put forward for this post of *contrôleur général*, a powerful party used every means to prevent his appointment, 'going so far,' according to Voltaire² (*Dictionnaire philosophique*, article 'Livres'), 'as to make it a crime on his part to have translated from the English a work of Warburton.'³ The same party also attempted to make political capital out of his father-in-law's unfortunate *Conjectures*. The result was that all available copies of both the offending books were bought up and consigned to the flames by their respective authors. Hence the rarity of Astruc's work.

The argument of the book will form the subject of a second article.

² Michaud, *Biographie Universelle*, t. xxxix., art. 'Silhouette.' Further details regarding S. will be found in Clement and Lemoine's *M. de Silhouette, Boret*, etc.

³ This was *The Alliance between Church and State*, etc., 1736, of which a translation by M. de Silhouette appeared in 1742, under the title, *Dissertation sur l'union de la religion et de la Politique*, 2 vols. 12mo.

Requests and Replies.

It is not infrequently argued against ultra-ministerial authority, in the Church, that St. John avers all baptized Christians to be 'kings and priests' (Rev. i. 6). But the analogue of the king is the high priest. (1) Do St. John's words really countenance this presumption that *all Christians are high priests*? (2) Have these texts any relevance to the argument against the authority (ἐξουσία not δόξα) of bishops and priests over such 'high priests'? —J. F. H.

(1) THE analogy of the king to the high priest is not worth much, for it can be turned round if we note that there was but *one* high priest. Yet the writer to the Hebrews tells us that all Christians have the access to God which even the high priest only had in a measure. (2) Why should the text touch the authority of bishops and presbyters any more than that of kings, whom St. John does not set above the 'priests'? The utmost that can be inferred is that neither bishops nor kings have any authority to make them cease from being priests.

Cambridge.

H. M. GWATKIN.

In the June number Dr. Laidlaw replied to a correspondent upon the subject of Conversion. A sentence or two in this reply have caused me difficulties where I never saw them before. I do not wish to be captious or to argue for the sake of arguing, and I should not venture to cross swords with Dr. Laidlaw. The importance of the subject is the sole reason for referring to it, and I feel I shall only display my own ignorance, but I wish to be clear on the matter. Dr. Laidlaw says: 'Their new birth was an instantaneous transaction, as it must always be, though it happened at a stage of life when they were not conscious. There can be no such thing as gradual regeneration. Birth is transition.' I quite understand that regeneration is instantaneous, but I cannot believe it is 'not conscious.' A being not conscious is not born. There is no gradual regeneration, but also no unconscious regeneration. Otherwise regeneration would be without faith, and a regenerated man might believe he was a lost sinner because he is not conscious of his regeneration. As Dr. Laidlaw says, 'Regeneration is purely and wholly a divine act': it is not a human act, but it is no mere divine purpose, it is an act. As an act of God on