

The BBC began a new series on TV last night (16<sup>th</sup> March 2011). It was written and presented by an atheist, so you can guess the kind of thing it got up to! The BBC hates Christianity and shows it in this kind of misleading material, just as it does when it upholds Islam, environmentalism and homosexuality.

The first in the series did what I expected it to do, so I was not let down! I could clearly detect the points at which academic trickery was used to confuse and mislead the TV audience, most of whom know nothing about how an academic argument *should* be formed, or what criteria *should* be applied to studies of scripture.

The writer and presenter, Dr Francesca Stavrakopoulou, is well qualified academically, but her true knowledge of scripture is non-existent. Her doctorate looked at the 'misrepresentations' in the Hebrew Bible. Though so well qualified as an academic she begins with the belief that there is no God. Therefore, anything she says is bound to be founded on her atheism and not on the truth.

In the first part of her series she therefore makes dramatic assertions she cannot prove – that David was a myth, as was his defeat of Goliath, and his mighty kingdom. In her work as a Senior Lecturer in the theology department of Exeter University, she teaches her students in 'methods of historical reconstruction', a favourite theme in the discredited methods of Higher Criticism. She also teaches 'secular approaches to teaching and learning biblical studies'. She brings these dubious attributes to the new series on BBC 2, 'The Bible's Buried Secrets'. The same badly-formed exegesis is applied to programmes on Channel 4, 'The Bible: A History' (2010).

She claims that God had a wife (!) and Eve suffered from sexism (Daily Mail, 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011), because she was blamed for the fall of mankind. Indeed, she believes the whole Bible is sexist! She thinks that Eve was not the first woman, because, she says, the Garden of Eden did not belong in the 'original' Old Testament. However, former MP, Ann Widdicombe (a Catholic) rightly said that "other theologians will demolish her theory in three seconds flat". Stavrakopoulou sees what she does "as a branch of history like any other".

Mischievously, she claims that the BIBLE says Jehovah had a wife (Asherah, fertility goddess),

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and she was at his side (?) as a figurine in the Temple at Jerusalem, where she was worshipped! This incredible opinion (for it is nothing more) is based on what? Interestingly, her work attempts to destabilize the claim of Israel to the land it now calls its own, adding fuel to the ongoing hatred Palestine has for Israel. She also thinks that worship of one God 'emerged' slowly, though scripture says otherwise.

Director of Research for the theology department at Exeter, Professor David Horrell, thinks the new series is good because it brings cloistered research to the public view. But, the 'research' is of no real interest to the BBC, whose main consideration is to 'bash Christianity'! The research is only a means to that end. This lady is promoting her personalised ideas, tainted by a form of feminism, and rooted in atheism. But, to the average viewer, there are great photographs and a convincing dialogue. Convincing, that is, if you are clueless about higher-critical history techniques, personalised theology, atheism, the BBC's hatred for God, and about the way academics twist their ideas to make them seem sound.

What is really wrong with the new series? I am not complaining about the series itself, but about the fact that there is no immediate or adequate come-back in the shape of reasoned and proper academic counter-argument. Yes, some objections will filter through the media tea-strainer, but because they will only be allowed bits and pieces they will seem to be just sour-grapes. This is intended by the BBC, so that the Bible is *again* knocked to pieces by 'research', which is no better than personal musings given space by atheistic universities and fellow academics.

Oddly, though the woman is an historian, she bases her absurd claims on archaeology! Yet – and this must be understood – ***archaeology can only speak about what is, not about what is not! It can only make statements about things found, not about things not found!***

The good doctor asserts that because almost nothing has been found to substantiate David or his kingdom, neither existed! She scorns the idea of David killing Goliath for the same reason, and because Higher Criticism does not accept it. She says David could not have had a huge army, enough to vanquish Israel's foes... but does not understand that David's army was made up of experienced fighting farmers and others who went to war on command of the king – there *was* no standing army! She even tried to say there were only 20 villages in Judah at the time – that is an amazing assertion to make without adequate documentation! We know from scripture that David had a large-enough army.

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We cannot make claims on what we do not find or know! Yet, typically, the BBC has made this kind of fake academicism the norm for its programmes. True academic research allows for counter-arguments, but this woman is deliberately foisting her personal views on the public as if they were laws. And the public, unaware of what genuine academic research involves, will just accept what she says as 'proven'.

Her arguments in the series can easily be knocked-back, but the BBC does not work that way! So, the public have no idea it is being subjected to propaganda. And they have no idea that higher critical historians are godless and are not appropriate people to lead a prime-time Bible series. The Bible is NOT just another book! So, the doctor's contributions are worthless. (See our articles on Higher Criticism).

As one reader commented – it is worth noting that the Bible is the ONLY historical text to be presumed unreliable/false even before anyone studies it. Even the most incomplete works, and even fragments, are accepted at face value and accorded reliability by historians. The reasons for this are obvious.

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