

Oxford,  
June 14th (1913).

CUS417/35.62

At the same time he must have written immediately to others on the subject as the following replies are preserved:-

From Professor Sir Alexander Simpson. to W.O.  
52, Queen Street,  
Edinburgh.

June 21, 1913.

Dear Sir William,

Your letter to Rev. Dr. Dixon about Jean Astruc reached him just as he was setting out for America. He asked his Assistant Minister to forward me the letter as he had sent me quite recently a copy of the book from which he quoted the disparaging reference to Astruc.

BOOKS 1812-2







BOOKS, 1913-5.

Jean Astruc (continued).

It is a work on "The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch" by Wm. Henry Green, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature in Princeton Theological Seminary. Scribner's 1910. At p. 62 he says that the first attempt to decompose "the book into the prior documents supposed to have been imbedded in it was made in 1753 by Astruc, a French physician of considerable learning but of profligate life". In a note he says "For an account of the life and character of the author see the article Jean Astruc, by Dr. Howard Osgood, in The Presbyterian and Reformed Review, for January 1892".

wrote  
 Since my student days I had a kind of respect for the man who, ~~treat~~ a treatise on midwifery which is still of historical interest - tho' he had never attended a case of labour, and to which he appends a letter to back a friend who had been bamboozled by a sceptic who wanted to know how Adam knew how to deal with Cain's umbilical cord. Astruc gives various explanations, but is best satisfied himself with the idea that God came and gave Adam a lesson - was, in short, the first Professor of Midwifery!

But Osgood's article is staggering. He goes to his work clearly enough with a prejudice, alleging that Astruc tried to destroy the authenticity of the Bible because he had become a wicked old man with some stings of conscience that he owed to his Huguenot descent. He had searched into the histories of the Court scandals of a specially scandalous court and leaves you the impression that his authorities justify him in depicting his victim as a contemptible old sinner who had broken every law of the decalogue.

I had a fancy to write an article for my friend Sir Wm. Robertson Nicoll calling attention of theologians to him as a defender of the faith in the appendix I refer to. But I don't write easily, and when I read Osgood's paper a few years ago I shrank the more from the task.. His remarkable ability is freely admitted. If you can clear up his character I will be glad.

In any case I like to see you stand up on his behalf.

Believe me, with best regards,

Yours very faithfully,

A. R: SIMPSON.