

**EGOISM: A STUDY IN
THE SOCIAL PREMISES
OF RELIGION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649527090

Egoism: A Study in the Social Premises of Religion by Louis Wallis

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

LOUIS WALLIS

**EGOISM: A STUDY IN
THE SOCIAL PREMISES
OF RELIGION**

EGOISM: A STUDY IN
THE SOCIAL PREMISES
OF RELIGION

BY
LOUIS WALLIS



CHICAGO
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
1905

NU

COPYRIGHT, 1905
By LOUIS WALLIS

Wahr
8161
Revised
1-16-1923

Published, December, 1905

Composed and Printed By
The University of Chicago Press
Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A.

Volume 7-24 of N.T.T. © 1-19-23 L.N.

TO
G. H. T.
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

415218



PREFACE

This essay falls naturally into three parts, taking its main title from the first.

The thesis of the first division is not in any sense original, although the treatment possibly has points of novelty. The idea that all human activity is either directly or *indirectly* egoistic, or selfish, is not new. We lay this down as a universal fact of history in the proposition: "Egoism is the only 'force' propelling the social machine."

The second and largest part of the essay illustrates this proposition from a quarter which, we maintain, offers the most dramatic evidence in its favor—biblical history. We hold that the Bible, interpreted from the standpoint of so-called higher criticism, brings us more directly and vividly into relation with the fundamental facts of personality (i. e., the struggle of the ego for life) than anything else. The egoistic proposition is within the domain of *sociology*; and if we would grasp the significance of the Bible, we must approach it, first of all, as a *social* phenomenon. The logical ultimate of higher criticism is, that the total body of religious conception in the Bible arose out of, and in dependence upon, the so-called secular experience of Israel. The critical movement has been approaching this position for some time, although deficient sociological insight has impeded its progress. There is nothing anomalous about the

sociological deficiency of biblical scholarship, for the biblical higher criticism itself is but a part of that wider historico-critical movement which is a necessary antecedent of sociology. The order is not: sociology; *then*, criticism. It is the reverse. The critical movement at large clears the way for true historical insight, and thus (among other factors) helps to make possible a science of sociology. There is then a halt while certain men are deployed in order to become familiarized with the social process *per se*. Then the sociologists return to modify the critical movement, whereupon the entire intellectual process is ready to advance another stage.

And this is the point that we of today have reached. The higher criticism of the Bible seems to have taught us all it can. Of late years there has been a period of waiting, with no apparent progress. We are in a peculiar situation. Not only has the older view of the Bible lost ground; but the new view, despite the exertions of its defenders, does not associate itself with a quickening of the popular faith. What is called "reverent modern scholarship" thinks that all we need is to recover the standpoint of ancient creative prophecy, in the Old and New Testament alike, and then apply its ethical messages to the present. But the church, the official embodiment of religion, meets progressive loss of influence and enthusiasm. Do present conditions mean that there is, then, no ground for enthusiasm, and no object for faith? We think not. The critics charge the situation to the conservatives; while the con-

servatives, on the other hand, are quite sure that the critics are responsible for the whole business.

It is certain that the biblical higher criticism has come to stay. It will be a presupposition of future thinking. As Dr. C. F. Kent, Yale professor of biblical literature, well says: "The conclusions [of criticism] are not those of an individual, nor of a school, nor even of one generation of scholars. They are based not on theories, nor on the often fanciful traditions of Jewish rabbis or early church fathers, but on the solid basis of facts presented by the Old Testament books themselves. They are in turn substantiated by the independent testimony of history and comparative literature. It is safe, therefore, to regard them as no longer on trial or under suspicion, but rather as the foundations—as sure as enlightened human insight and scientific method can discover—upon which Old Testament interpretation and doctrine are in the future to rest."¹

But, in the face of the triumph of criticism, the strictures upon the reigning school on behalf of conservatism by Professor James Robertson, of the University of Glasgow, remain profoundly true. "The modern theory," says this writer, "is strong in minute analysis, but weak in face of great controlling facts. . . . Nabiism, or the prophetic activity, even Yahwism itself, are borrowed from the Canaanites or Kenites; and when it is asked why the Canaanites or Kenites did not reach the same truth that Israel attained, we get no answer. And when we ask what then had

¹ Kent, *The Beginnings of Hebrew History* (New York, 1904), p. 29.