

THE FAILURE OF THE "HIGHER CRITICISM" OF THE BIBLE

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The Failure of The "Higher Criticism" of the Bible by Emil Reich

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BY

EMIL REICH

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PREFACE

OF the five chapters of the present work, the first two chapters appeared in the *Contemporary Review* for February and April 1905. The other three chapters form the substance of various lectures given by the author in London, at Edinburgh, and elsewhere. All the five chapters are results of an historic examination of the claims of "Higher Criticism," commenced many years ago. The author is not a clergyman, and has no intention whatever to become one. He means to serve the ends of no ecclesiastical party. He searches for nothing but Truth. Many years ago, he fully believed in the "scientific character" of Higher Criticism; but having learnt more about Life and Reality by means of extensive travels and varied experience, he has come to the conclusion that Higher Criticism is bankrupt as a method of research, and pernicious as a teaching of religious truth. It is a perversion of History and a

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desecration of Religion. May this little book help unprejudiced minds to gain a truer and more reverential conception of the Holy Book of Mankind. It is intended not only to destroy the "scientific" spell of "Higher Criticism," but also to construct the right method of comprehending the Bible.

EMIL REICH.

LONDON, *August 6, 1906.*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION—THE ARGUMENT FROM THE MASAI LEGENDS

DESPITE all the great debt which we owe to the Renaissance, we must admit that it has foisted one great incubus upon us, and that is, the blind admiration of words. The Renaissance was undoubtedly due in very large measure to the humanists, and it was their superior knowledge of Greek and Latin that at all events aided in bringing about the vast change which at that time came over the whole mental life of Europe. What the Renaissance would have been without Greek, I do not intend here to debate. It would probably have been irreparably crippled, and Europe would perhaps never have succeeded in its present career had it not been able to walk in the footsteps of Greece. All that I would here say is, that the

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reverence which has been paid to the mere externals of humanism has been greatly exaggerated. The words, which were the mere instruments through which the new inspiration was conveyed, have been worshipped as much, if not more, than the inspiration itself. The dicta of the philologist, without any further qualification, have been accepted with even greater admiration and adulation than have the great words of the great pioneers of human thought.

Who in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the great receivers of rewards? Not Copernicus, not the incomparable Kepler, not Descartes, not Giordano Bruno, not Spinoza, persecuted by every synod of the Seven Provinces, denied by father, mother, sister, and dying as an outcast pariah, when still in the heyday of manhood. But Scaliger, who, admirable as may be his philological *ἀκρίβεια*, cannot claim to have advanced humanity, was invited to the newly-founded University of Leyden; he was appointed professor at a handsome salary; no obligation was required of him in return; he was not to lecture unless he graciously felt so disposed; his mere presence was deemed to shed lustre enough upon the great Dutch

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University. Compare the position of poor Pascal in France with that of Casaubon, king of commentators, adulated by Henry IV., perhaps the greatest monarch of France, who tried to wheedle and coax him into Catholicism, who patted him literally on the cheek and metaphorically on the back; thinking, as the King did, that if Casaubon, whom the world regarded as the mirror of all wisdom, could be gained as a convert, Protestantism in France might be extinguished much more easily. And when Casaubon was weary of France, was there not a warm welcome for him in England? James I., who could never see what he had in Bacon, was too delighted to have a Casaubon and to pay him well for the interchange of philological gabble. Meanwhile James left Shakespeare without recognition, so that to-day, there being little known about the great poet, Shakespeare bids fair to be treated as a myth by latter-day historians. Why should we speak of Bentley, whose acute scholarship, expended in ingenious emendations of Horace, won him honour and renown, although to-day, as we are told by M. Salomon Reinach, out of his hundreds of emendations of Horace only half-a-dozen meet