

CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

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Criticism of the New Testament by Various

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VARIOUS

**CRITICISM OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT**

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ST. MARGARET'S LECTURES

1902

BY

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Prefatory Note

THE condition of sound interpretation of Scripture is honest and thorough criticism. Ultimately all our theological and ecclesiastical discussions turn on the treatment of the sacred text, and it is beyond question that within the last two generations the traditional treatment has been to an extent which is difficult to exaggerate disallowed. Much of our standard theological literature is practically worthless because based on a discarded exegesis; and it is humiliating to reflect that much current preaching and teaching of religion is only tolerated because the religious public remains extraordinarily ignorant of the assured results of Biblical Science. In the prevailing ignorance unwarrantable fears invade the general mind, and create a panic-stricken prejudice against critical studies, eminently favourable to that resuscitation of fanaticism which is one of the most curious and melancholy characteristics of our time. It becomes therefore a

matter of no slight importance that sound knowledge as to the methods and conclusions of criticism should be disseminated as widely as possible among the people. The lectures here printed were designed as a first step in a serious effort to awaken popular interest in Biblical Science, and to set out clearly the broad principles on which that criticism proceeds. Of course only the fringe of the subject is here touched. The names of the lecturers will sufficiently commend their work to all who have any acquaintance with the world of contemporary scholarship. Without exception they speak with the authority of recognized experts. I may be permitted to set on record my cordial thanks for the ready kindness with which they consented to co-operate with me in an undertaking, which, apart from them, I should have been powerless to carry through. The famous and beautiful Church of S. Margaret, Westminster, is, in many notable respects, well suited to be a teaching-centre of that New Learning, which is slowly but surely revolutionizing Christian thought. I have always felt that the critical results, secured by the labours of scholars in the Universities, ought to be more directly, and, so to speak, naturally communicated to the Church at large, and given their proper effect in the current doctrine and worship. There are many educated laymen, who have no time for reading elaborate works, and whose lack of acquaintance with

the technicalities of criticism makes such works uninteresting and even unintelligible, who yet are keenly interested in the honest treatment of Scripture, and fully able to appreciate critical methods and results when these are set before them with reasonable lucidity. No worse disaster to religion could well be imagined than the divorce of critical scholarship from average belief. Criticism must not be allowed to take an esoteric character, but, at all hazards, must be held closely to the current teaching of the Church. These lectures will have justified their publication, and answered to the purpose with which they were originally planned, if, in however small a measure, they contribute to this end.

It is requisite that I should state clearly that every lecturer's responsibility is strictly confined to his own contribution, and that I myself must answer for the plan of the lectures and the choice of subjects and lecturers.

H. HENSLEY HENSON.

WESTMINSTER, *August*, 1902.

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