

Renan also was a rarely fitted man, not only as a writer of terse graceful French, a thinker of agile if somewhat too flexible intelligence, but even as a scholar and an exponent of what used to be called in those days the Higher Criticism. But admirably equipped as he was, he had serious shortcomings which to-day make him appear strangely out of date. He thought that science could explain—and with respect to religious questions explain away—everything. He had an easy jaunty manner of treating Christianity and even Theism as poetic beliefs born of deep instincts of the human soul, which, fearlessly analysed, turned out to be only the mythical expression of these instincts; God was merely a convenient word, the resurrection of Christ was a legend created by love, and His divinity was the metaphysical translation of similar legends. All this sounded distinguished and final; and the result was that belief appeared uncritical and undeveloped. As a matter of fact it took years of reconsideration of the same questions to enable a man like Dr. Sanday, for instance, who knows a great deal more about Biblical criticism than was known in Renan's day, to be respected as a scholar though speaking as a believer. One had to be advanced or to be regarded as a fossil.

Some people would occasionally observe that these doctrines might be scientific but their immediate effect was morally depressing and even deteriorating. If it was not certain that there was a divine influence in the world or a spiritual substance in man, if there was no free-will and we were the playthings of fatality, what was the use of a great deal that had hitherto been held indispensable to good living and happy dying? Of this objection Taine disposed at once with the greatest ease: speculation and life were different things, as art and our every-