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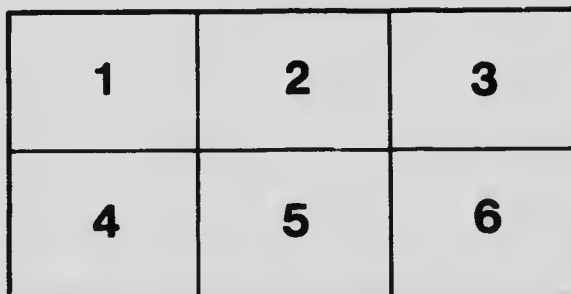
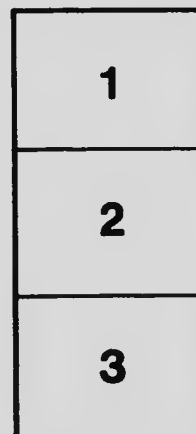
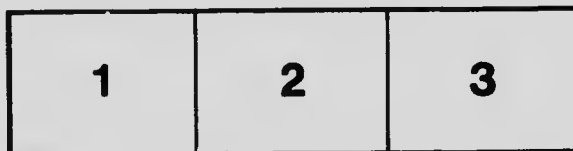
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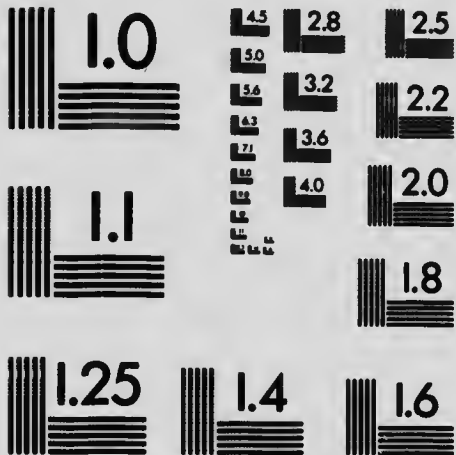
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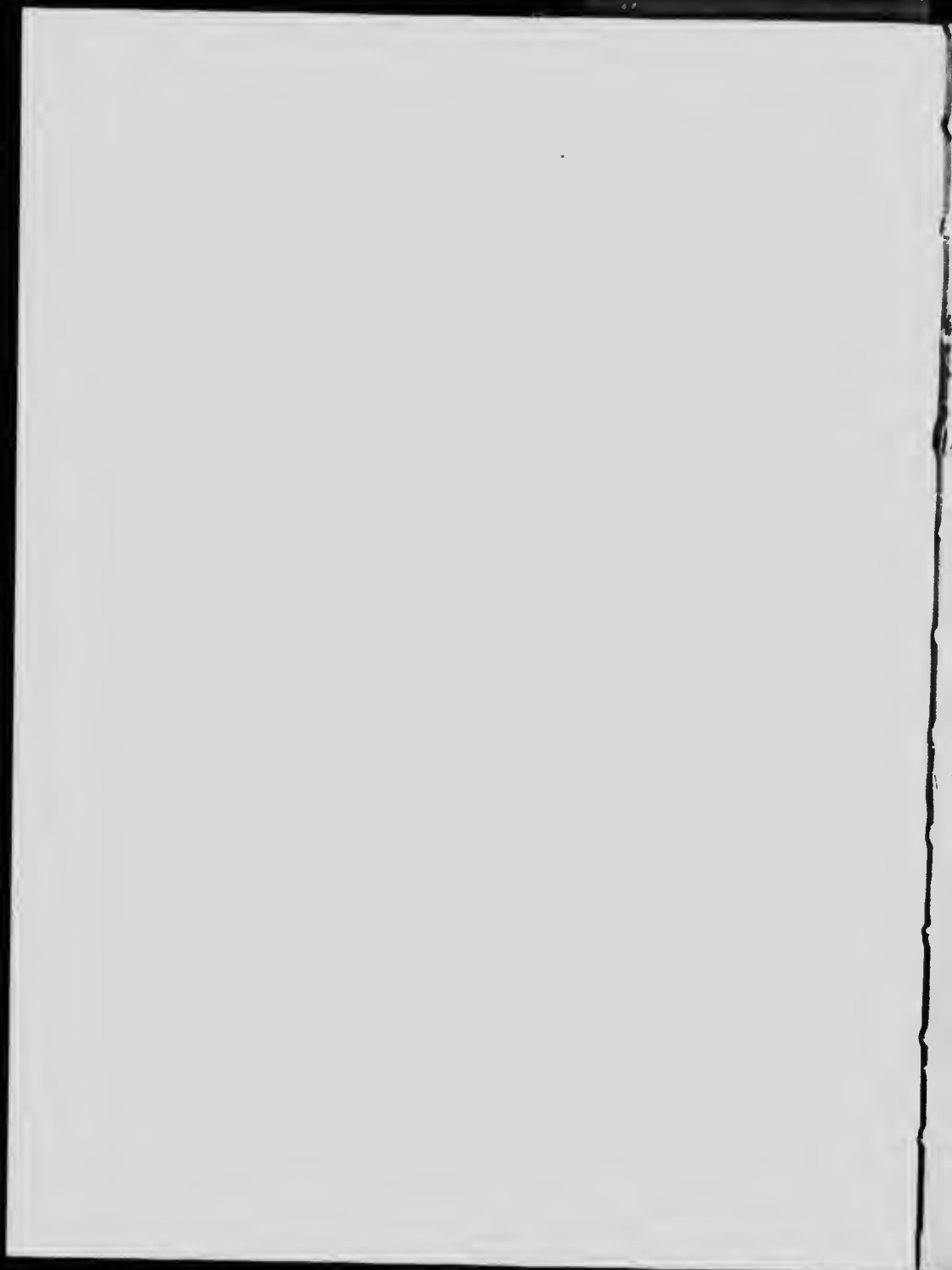
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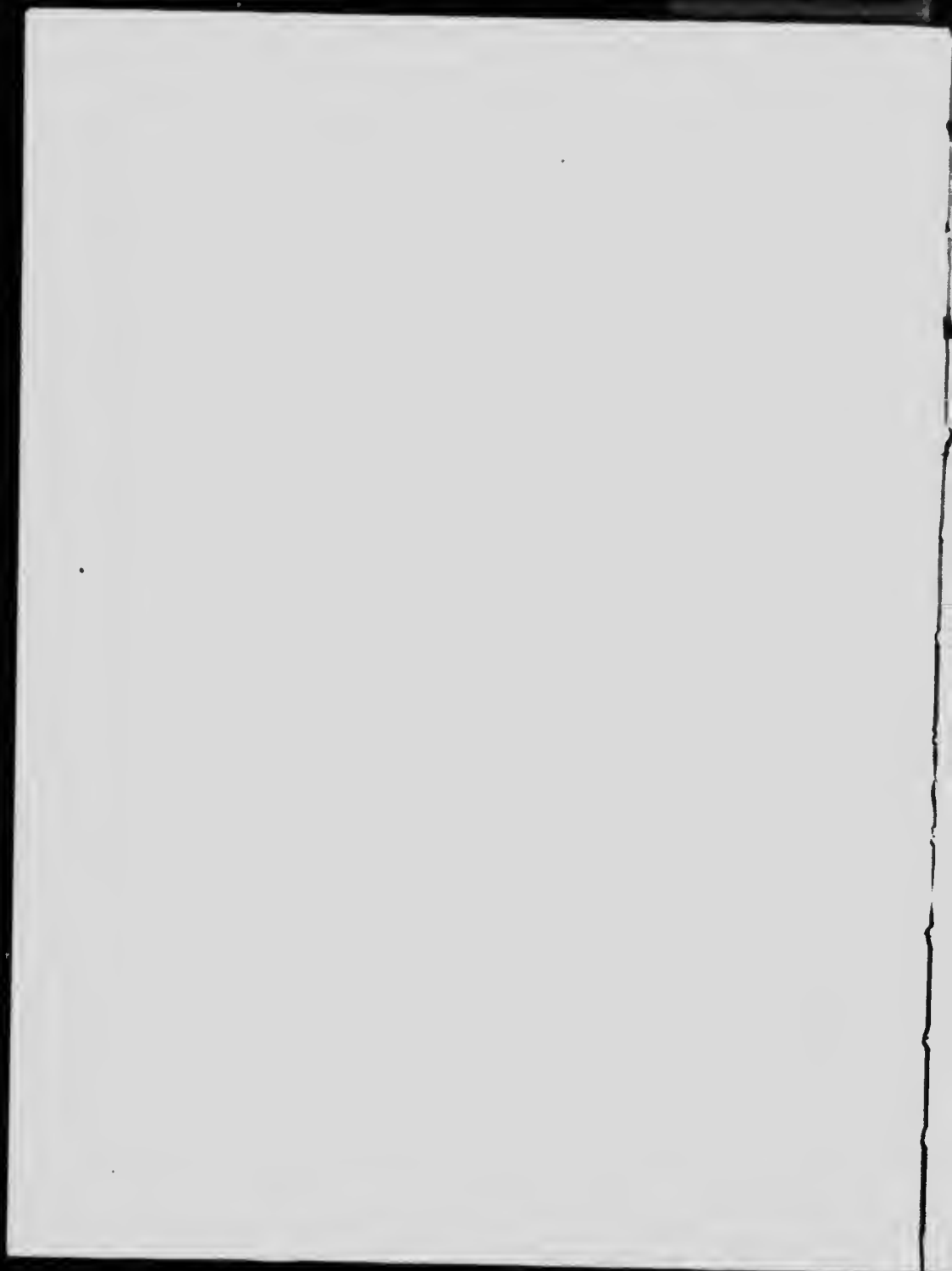
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The Knife of the Higher Critic

The Judgment of the Lord

The Burial of an Ass



The Knife of the Digger Critic
The Judgment of the Lord
The Burial of an Ass

“Baruch wrote . . . all the words of the Lord . . . upon the roll of a book.”—Jer. 36, 4.

“When Jehoiada had read three or four leaves he (the king Jehoiakim) cut it with a penknife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth until all the roll was consumed in the fire.”—Jer. 36, 2.

“Thus saith the Lord (concerning Jehoiakim), . . . he shall be buried with the burial of an ass.”—Jer. 22, 18, 19.

“Then took Jeremiah another roll and gave it to Baruch, who wrote therein . . . all the words of the book which Jehoiakim . . . had burned in the fire.”—Jer. 36, 22.

BS 540

B49

Toronto, April 11th, 1909.

My Dear Sir,—I do not think that there can be a doubt in the mind of any person honestly surveying the situation, but that the wonderful missionary meetings which took place in the city of Toronto during the last week have presented an object lesson in respect of our Bible, the immense value and importance of which it is impossible to exaggerate.

What was the constraining power in the heart of each one in these vast assemblies which aroused them to a loving sense of duty to be performed?—The Bible—The Word of the living God. What was the great centre towards which each one in the vast assemblies turned for inspiration, direction, guidance and power?—The Bible—The Word of the Living God. What was the instrument to be employed in carrying on the world-wide programme of our Blessed Lord, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature"?—The Bible—The Word of the Living God. Has the Bible been found ineffective in the Work or has the Bible proved itself to be the power of God unto salvation? Yea verily, "It is the power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth;" and as He "hath made of one blood all nations," and there is the taint of sin in all the blood, there is there found the common and only remedy for this Universal disease. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." How often have rejoicing missionaries proved the truth of the promise of the Author of the words, "It shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"?

What a splendid bead roll is given to us in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews of those who through faith in the Word of the Living God "subdued kingdoms,

wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

This is the Holy Bible, the Word of God, the direct revelation from Heaven, the Book which has become a part of our being; and which alone has given the soul-satisfying message, the blessed word of eternal life, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This is the Book which has been our comfort in sorrow and our help in time of need. This is the "everlasting Gospel" which is to be preached "unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Can we give this up? Can we allow it to be impaired? Dare we abandon it? Dare we be false to our God and His Word and leave our children and our children's children in darkness, letting go the Book which for nigh two thousand years has been the light to the centuries and a lamp to the path of the people who sat in darkness? Let us see what we are offered in exchange for the Word and Commandments of the Lord, "which are above gold, yea, fine gold."

I have just finished reading "The Finality of the Christian Religion," by G. B. Foster, Professor of the "Philosophy of Religion" in the University of Chicago—the institution which issues some of the theological text-books in use in our city.

I have been simply appalled by the hideousness of the revelation of "the horrible pit" into which the Higher Criticism seeks to precipitate its followers. Listen to the following quotation at page 403:

"As in the storm and stress of life we often recall the halcyon days of youth, with their peace and rest, so we

may pathetically turn our wistful eyes to the certainty and comfort which once reposed upon the inspiration dogma. But we have been driven from Eden out into the wilderness, and must henceforth earn the Bread of Life by the sweat of our brow for, as we have often said, the assumption of the inspiration of the text has been shattered, definitively and irretrievably shattered. Out in the wilderness we must now blaze out a path amid the thorns by means of Criticism."

And this critic so freely uses his knife that he has cut away among many fundamental statements in our Bible the teaching as to a miraculous conception, the Messiah, Jesus the sinless Saviour, God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, all miracles, including that of the Resurrection, and has left us, woeful to relate, a man who it is not admitted was without sin, and about whom a certain glamour was cast because of certain Messianic notions which were prevalent! The Christian may truly and most mournfully say of such cutting away of all the material portions of the Bible, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." How applicable are the words of the Apostle to the dealing of the present-day critics with our Blessed Lord and Master, "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame."

Another friend asks me in bewildered amazement, "What have scientific discoveries and methods to do with three-fourths of the difficulties that are presented by the Higher Critics?" I answer you, absolutely nothing! There is a pretence made of some new light which it is thought should interfere with the Bible history of the Creation. But then follow volumes of attack simply based upon the proposition that the miraculous is to be eliminated from the whole of the Bible.

Therefore from the birth of our Blessed Lord until His ascension into Heaven there was no miracle; but an ordinary man was born who lived a good life, and therefore the whole of the Bible is to be re-made so as to suit the preconceived notions thus stated, and this man-given Bible is to be substituted for the Word of the Living God!

The old belief is thus dealt with by Professor Foster at page 14 in a note of which he approves:

“Teachers are compelled to recite formally, as though they believed them, Bible stories and professions of faith which both intellect and conscience reject. . . . Preachers delude themselves and their hearers with ingenious sophistries such as in the market would incur a charge of obtaining money under false pretences. And yet, amid this mephitic atmosphere of falsehood, we expect that loyalty of soul, and truth in the inward parts, and simplicity of character shall flourish. Surely the time has come when lies and hypocrisy should be swept out from the temple of the Lord. For these choke prayer and make worship almost a blasphemy.”

Will those Higher Critics who deprecate the desire of Christians to prevent the knife of the Higher Critic from cutting our Bible to pieces note that their desire and determination is to deny inspiration, the miraculous, the Messianic Christ, the Lord Jesus our sin-bearer and our Righteousness, to treat these as falsehoods, and those who believe in them as liars and hypocrites? This is their claim. This is the issue presented. There is no heresy hunting about it. Blatantly, infidelity comes out into the field and proclaims this issue, and, while some in our theological colleges and in our pulpits still think it wiser “to walk softly,” yet their walk is in the same direction, and, when the education has proceeded suffi-

ciently far, the "soft walking" will be changed for the more noisy movements of the Higher Critic.

I think it will be instructive to show the usual uncertain foundation for further attack thus presented at page 23:

"If the Old Testament required to be completed by the New, is there any antecedent improbability that the New Testament itself needed to be supplemented by new revelations still?"

Let me present to you this cold, Easter Day sermon from page 135. It is not a bad sample of the chilling, barren, emasculated Gospel with which they would ask us to replace our splendid song of praise at Eastertide:

"While war has long been waged against miracle; while in the consciousness of humanity faith in miracle has been increasingly shaken, while miracle has come to be a burden instead of a support to religion, it is yet still true that it is more difficult for Christianity to detach itself from miracle than it is for any other religion whatsoever. This is mainly because the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Jesus has been propagated into the very centre of Christian conviction, has so fixed its stamp upon this religion that the latter seems to many to stand or fall with the historicity of that event. 'If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins,' writes Paul. Is it not well to ask ourselves whether we are in a position to participate experientially in this Pauline proposition? We are dependent upon the narratives of the Gospels and the witness of Paul to form an idea of what occurred after the death of Jesus. But these are by no means so consistent as to render assent to the actuality of the occurrences a requirement of conscience."

How marvellous is the darkness which prevents this

writer from being able to see with Paul the vanity of our faith and hope if we cannot from the heart say, "The third day He rose again from the grave." The arch-critic led our first parents to destruction by the statement, "Ye shall not surely die." His follower of to-day follow his example in, "He did not surely rise from the grave." With what thankfulness of heart should we join in the saying of our Lord, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Although most offensive to the Christian, let us have a little further of this Easter discourse. Page 431: "A Heavenly Being pre-existing in Divine Glory dwelt on this earth for a brief period, died, rose again, and returned to his former, though more glorious, mode of existence in Heaven, whence He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. This idea, or, rather, this drama, has probably been the most potent factor in the history of religion." Page 432 he states of the following quotation that "this is well said."

"But the thought that a Divine Being left Heaven, entered into a human shell and then died, but to ascend to Heaven again, is not changed thereby in its nature. Whosoever cannot put his faith in it, for him it is in essence necessarily a mythological idea."

"Hitherto Christianity has been Messianity. But it does not follow that this must be so for the future."

Page 433: "The fantastic idea that a dead person should return upon the clouds of Heaven chills the modern intellect quite as much as belief in a pre-existent personal Messiah."

Page 509: "The only thing that is certain is that Jesus never conceived and expressed the idea that the

Divine forgiveness of sin is dependent in principle upon his death, or upon the substitutionary 'satisfaction' consummated in His Death. The parable of the Prodigal Son, and the unconditioned certainty with which Jesus all his life long preached a present, gracious, sin-forgiving God, protest powerfully against that traditional dogma."

This gentleman will not stand what should be made with Christians to-day the universal test, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

I must close with this one more quotation from this writer.

Page 406-7: "Time was when, at the mention of the name Jesus, many thought of Church doctrine, of Christology, dogma, the old creed, which lay like a veil upon the personality of Jesus; they thought of the veil, of the wrappings woven by speculation of the deity; of the 'conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary'; of resurrection, descent into hell, ascent into Heaven; of return on the clouds; of miracle upon miracle; of the whole Church belief in its massive formation with its materialism and its magic! To-day we live in a world characterized by nothing so much as by the absence of any psychological soil in which these fantasies can find nourishment. If these things constitute the Christian religion, that religion is already an antiquated affair, a relic that is worthless to the cultivated classes. Christological dogmas really signify for many children of our time a sarcophagus of the personality of Jesus and of his religion, and are responsible for the sad ignorance concerning Jesus and the essence of His religion. One casts aside the gold with the dross. One flees from Christology as from a ghost, without ever having seen Jesus."

May we not well exclaim with the prophet, "Be astonished, O ye Heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, he ye very desolate, said the Lord. For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."—Jer. 2-12, 13.

They take away from us the Bread of Life and do not even give us a stone in its stead. But they offer us a fake Bible composed of the vapourings of the rationalists of Germany, France, Great Britain and North America, dressed up according to the so-called Common Sense of him who happens to be for the time its editor; a gold brick, where the alchemy of the Critic has turned the fine gold of the Word into dross; a kaleidoscope of the Scientific-new-light type, warranted, if scientific-ly handled, to give a nine days' wonder. Is it not an insult to the intelligence of a Christian community to say, "There is no cause for alarm, we are improving and enlarging your Bible," when at the same time they, with their infidel knife, are in the most cold-blooded fashion cutting and carving and removing from our most blessed Lord and Master so much that is as dear to us as our own lives, and are, and I say it with all reverence, leaving us in its stead a poor, lifeless skeleton. At all times this should be, and is, most repulsive to the true Christian, but especially at this blessed period when so many millions have been sorrowfully leaving our blessed Lord and Master to Calvary and the grave, and thence, with exultant songs, to the glorious resurrection Easter Day, crowning Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with our Hallelujah Anthem:

"Jesus Christ is risen to-day,
Our triumphant Holy Day;
Who did once upon the Cross
Suffer to redeem our loss."

The epitaph on such a Higher Critic on cold, scientific lines might well be "buried with the burial of an ass"; but in the spirit of our own beloved risen and ascended Lord let us rather say of all Higher Critics as they crucify afresh our Lord and Master, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But you will say, is this a fair sample of the conclusions of all Higher Critics? I do not think so. Higher Criticism is a growth. Of these, as of all wanderers from the right, it may be truly said, "*Nemo repente fuit turpissimus.*" But the difficulty is that no clear line of demarcation is drawn. The higher critical mill works day and night. Thousands of volumes are placed upon the market. Some bad. Some worse. There is no discrimination. If the less pronounced critics do not desire to be named with the irreverent infidelity of the worst of that school, let them prepare an Index Expurgatorius and distribute it. Until this is done they can hardly blame the ordinary Christian for closing the door against all such literature and placing it in the same list.

It may, however, be interesting to give a summary of the general result of the work that is being carried on by this school of thought, and I proceed to do this. So that no exception may be taken to the source from which the information is procured nor its nature, I quote from a work of Prof. John E. McFadyen, of Knox College, "Old Testament Criticism and the Christian Church." His work sets forth, in the first place, the apparently irreparable harm that is being wrought by Higher Criticism. With this alone I deal. After setting forth the poison he deals with, what I conceive to be, a totally insufficient antidote. The correctness of this conclusion

may be determined by any person that chooses to peruse the further pages of the volume.

The first chapter is ominously styled "The Present Distress"; the second, "The Discourtesies of Criticism"; and the third, "The Confusions of Criticism." He begins the work with a statement to which I most earnestly call your attention, showing what is being done by this teaching:

"A distinguished preacher who has had long and ample opportunity for observation, and who has himself borne a conspicuous part in the conflict, expresses it as his deliberate conviction that there is being forced 'upon the British Churches the gravest issue that any of them has had to face in living memory.' Few men who have been following even remotely the most recent developments of Biblical study would deny that those earnest words contain a large measure of truth!"

Page 2: "Hundreds of men, we are told, have been made infidels by criticism. Ministers who have much to do with workmen tell us that 'the lowered views of Scripture, and of its truthfulness, reliability, and Divine authority, that have become prevalent, are undermining the faith of many, multiplying sceptics every day, and rendering appeals to Scripture as the Word of the Lord less powerful and quickening than they were wont to be.'"

This is a terrible indictment for any man to make against Higher Criticism, and becomes the more deplorable when he himself remains, notwithstanding his testimony against it, a Higher Critic.

He quotes from the Reverend J. J. Lias, that:

"Among the deplorable results of criticism the laity were being estranged from the Church."

Referring to the volume styled "Is Christ Infallible and the Bible True?" he gives the following statement of Dr. Theodore Cuyler:

"I am happy to say that in my early ministry the preachers of God's Word were not hamstrung by any doubt of the Divine inspiration or infallibility of the Book that lay before them on their pulpits. The questions, 'Have we got any Bible?' and 'If any Bible, how much?' had not been hatched."

Page 4: "Criticism seems to make the Old Testament alike inaccessible and unintelligible to the pastors and their flocks."

Page 5: "As competent an authority as Mr. C. G. Montefiore believes that the movement must issue either in Christian Unitarianism or in Jewish reform."

"Canon Girdlestone maintains that mission work at home and abroad would be paralyzed if the new criticism were allowed to have free course among us."

Page 9: "More important, however, is the charge that the credibility of the Bible is at stake."

"The Pentateuch in particular has suffered most severely, and has to be surrendered, as a historical authority, almost in its entirety."

"Even those who would repudiate the strong language of a certain conservative scholar that the books are, on this view, 'a conscious and painstaking forgery,' 'gangrened with fraud,' yet have an uneasy feeling that this attitude to the Bible is not quite compatible with a real deference to its authority."

"One of the features regarded as most painful and surprising in the attitude of the critics to Old

Testament questions is their apparent indifference to the explicit language of the New Testament."

Page 11: "Professor Clemen, one of the ablest New Testament scholars in Germany, roundly says that Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament has in certain of its applications been given up." "But the most distressing surprise of all is the discovery that the Words of Christ seem to meet with no more deference from the critics than the other words of the New Testament. The authority and finality which they deny to the New Testament in general they deny to Him in particular. Now, to most minds this is intolerable."

"The fundamental objection to the newer criticism, however, it is argued, is that it seems to ignore where it does not deny, the supernatural. Its watchword is evolution, and it has no place for miracle."

Page 12: "*The new criticism is found to be one with the old rationalism, and it is felt that it is only a question of time till the supernatural in the New Testament even in the person of Christ, will be as readily denied as the supernatural in the Old has been. A non-miraculous Old Testament history will issue in a non-miraculous Jesus, and then where are we?*"

Page 13: "As a speaker bluntly said at a recent meeting in Glasgow, 'It is impossible to believe at the same time that the Bible is a Book of blunders, and in any reasonable sense the Word of God.'"

"Meantime, what is the preacher to do? His task is unspeakably hard; his text-book is the Bible, the very Book which is treated in so cavalier a fash-

ion, and whose plainest statements are so coolly traversed by the men who are giving their lives to the study of it. Is it any wonder that . . . some are disposed to wash their hands of the criticism which presumptuously challenges the statements of a Book that has been a lamp to the centuries and has won the reverence of millions?"

Page 20: "Other charges of a more serious nature are urged. It is pointed out that criticism often assumes a flippant and irreverent tone; that it has no sense of the dignity of the great themes on which it lays unholy hands; that it does not even know its own mind—witness the notorious discrepancies among the critics themselves."

Page 21: "So that one is hardly surprised at Talmage's demand that 'the critics of the Bible go clear over, where they belong, to the devil's side.'"

Page 48: "The Confusions of Criticism."

"Of the many things which have tended to bring Higher Criticism into disrepute, not the least important has been the alleged existence of extraordinary differences in the results at which they, i.e., the Critics, arrive whilst starting from and building on the same critical principles. Kennedy complains that there is not the same unanimity, continuity, and ascertained progress in Old Testament studies that there is in the natural sciences."

Page 49: "There is little harmony among the critics as to the dates of the three leading documents."

Page 53: "Many questions of the highest importance raised by the prophetic literature receive the most diverse answers."

Page 60: "These divergencies, to which atten-

tion has thus been called, do not by any means exhaust the actual divergencies prevailing among the critics; nor are they perhaps even the most serious."

"One lays much stress upon tradition; another less, perhaps none. One believes Abraham to be an historical character; another asserts that such a belief argues lack of literary appreciation. One believes in the supernatural, another doubts or ignores it, etc. It may be frankly confessed that these differences are bewildering enough, and that they do not create a prima facie probability for the validity of critical methods."

Page 67: "Some of the main points at issue are of such a nature as not now to admit of final settlement. How precarious it is to draw inferences as to the date of a passage or a writing solely from the ideas which it contains."

"One is regarded as too finical, another as too modern."

"One of the most recent commentators of Jeremiah criticizes another for being capricious and fanciful."

"A recent commentator on Chronicles is taken to task for his unnecessary emendations of the text."

Page 90: "The errors and extravagances of criticism will be corrected in time by a criticism that is more alert and penetrating. Theories whose inadequacy can be proved will be modified or rejected and the fittest will survive."

Page 197: Referring to a statement of Dr. McCurdy's that: "There is really no Biblical tradition to the effect that David was a Psalm writer, the titles to the Psalms being unauthentic."

“A reviewer remarks: ‘We do not know what he calls the New Testament or what he would say of Christ and the Apostles, who repeatedly affirmed that some of the Psalms are written by David and based their argument upon the fact of His Authorship.’”

How horrible to think that one of the Higher Critics, still pursuing his criticisms, should himself present the immeasurable evil that is wrought among all, young and old, by their work! In how many forms do they raise the devil of doubt? They can easily raise it. But how few of those in whom it is raised will they bring back to a confidence in God’s Word? These men (the Higher Critics) state: “All these are presented, but we explain and remove the doubts and difficulties which we have implanted.” For it is to be observed that this is not the action of laymen, nor is it the demand of laymen, but it is the authorized Ministers of our Churches and Teachers in our Colleges who are spreading broadcast these seeds of unbelief. The experience of very many men who carefully weigh their language and investigate these matters is, that for fifty people whose assent they procure to such teaching they do not win back one by their explanations.

Verily these men seek to steal away our birthright, but do not even give us a mess of pottage in return.

It has been urged that the attacks made on the first eleven Chapters of Genesis and other portions of the Old Testament by the Higher Critics do not interfere with the essentials of Christianity, but it has been well answered that “the essence of Christianity is Christ, and any criticism which attacks Him attacks the very citadel of Christianity, and as the Higher Critics are attacking the Books of the Old Testament, to the truth of

which our Blessed Lord testified, they are opposing the very centre of our religion and our Church. The infidel attacks on the Bible in France led to this sacred volume being tied to the tail of a donkey and dragged through the streets of Paris, which so soon flowed with the blood shed in the terrible reign of terror that ensued as a judgment upon this unfortunate people. Looking at the aspect of matters in our own country to-day, it appears to me that the infidel attacks in our Colleges made upon the Word of God may shake the foundation of law and order, and bring upon us a reign of lawlessness and anarchy that will be terrible to our children. If this teaching be admitted as correct, we shall have to close our Bible Societies and Bible depots and cease the annual output of millions of copies of the Book, and have our missionary efforts all through the world paralyzed for want of that Word of the Living God, which is the basis of all our Christian work.

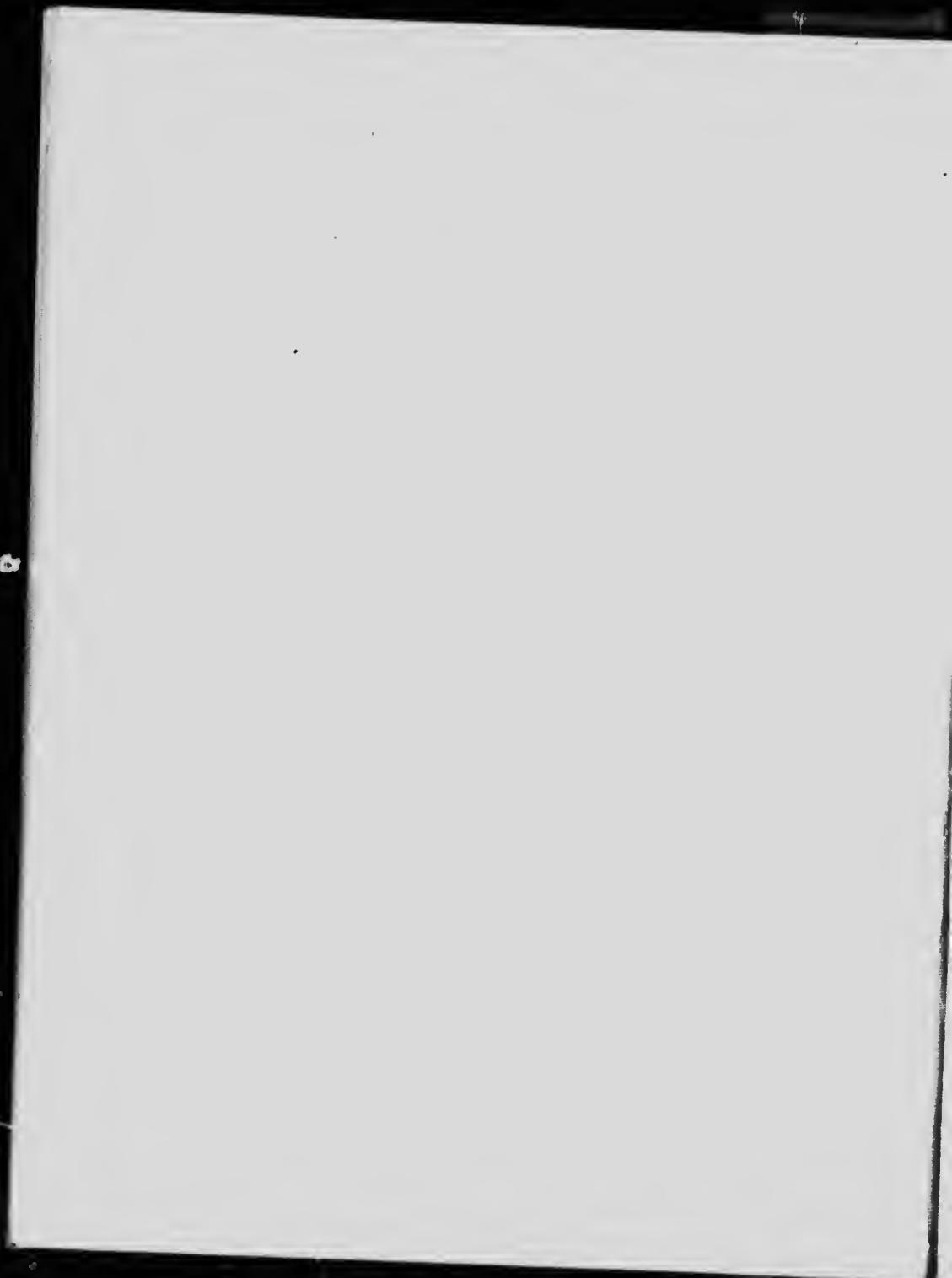
May God in His Goodness avert this catastrophe in our land.

Faithfully yours,

S. H. BLAKE.

Easter Day.





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