

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: DR. PAUL CARUS.
Assistant Editor: T. J. McCORMACK.

Associates: } E. C. HEGELER.
 } MARY CARUS.

VOL. XVI. (NO. 5)

MAY, 1902.

NO. 552

CONTENTS:

<i>Frontispiece.</i>	HEINRICH JULIUS HOLTZMANN.	
<i>Heinrich Julius Holtzmann.</i>	A Representative of the New Testament Higher Criticism. EDITOR	257
<i>Babel and Bible.</i>	A Lecture Delivered Before the German Emperor. With Many Illustrations (Concluded). PROF. FRIEDRICH DELITZSCH, University of Berlin	263
<i>Biblical Love-Ditties.</i>	DR. PAUL HAUPT, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore	291
<i>The Dissemination of Mithraism in the Roman Empire.</i>	Illustrated. PROF. FRANZ CUMONT, Ghent, Belgium	300
<i>The Words and Ways of English Speech</i>	312
<i>Hymn to the Sun.</i>	A Poem. The Late SIR C. E. CARRINGTON	316
<i>The Gaza Coin</i>	316
<i>Facsimile Edition of the Atharva-Veda</i>	317
<i>The Syllable "Aum" and the Mantra Cult.</i>	C. PFUNDEN	318
<i>Book Reviews</i>	319
<i>Notes</i>	320

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HEINRICH JULIUS HOLTZMANN.

Professor of Theology in the University of Strassburg. Born May 17, 1832.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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HEINRICH JULIUS HOLTZMANN.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT HIGHER
CRITICISM.

BY THE EDITOR.

PROFESSOR Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, one of the Coryphæi of the Higher Critics of Germany, and probably without doubt the leading living scholar of New Testament Theology, will celebrate during the present month the seventieth anniversary of his birthday. We take pleasure in participating in this celebration by publishing his portrait as the frontispiece to the present *Open Court*, and in calling the attention of our readers to the stupendous work he has been doing during his long and active life.

Heinrich Julius Holtzmann was born May 17, 1832, at Karlsruhe, Baden. He is the son of the late Prelate Julius Holtzmann, one of the dignitaries of the Baden Protestant Church, a man of prominence and genuine piety.

The son, Heinrich Julius, grew up under the Christian influence of his father's home. He studied from 1850 to 1854 in Heidelberg and Berlin, and held an appointment from 1854 to 1857 as vicar at Badenweiler. In 1858, he established himself as a privatdocent at the University of Heidelberg.

In the spirit of his paternal atmosphere the young theologian wrote his first work, *Canon and Tradition*, which appeared in 1859 as a contribution to the history of dogma. Here he still stands upon the old ground of a dogmatic interpretation of theology; but the Baden Church struggle served to broaden his views, and after a mature deliberation of the issue he joined the liberal party, strug-

gling for the rights of the congregation against the usurpation of the Church government by the consistory.

In 1861, Holtzmann accepted a position as assistant professor, and in 1865 as head professor, in the theological faculty of Heidelberg. In 1869 he married the daughter of the well-known historian Georg Weber and saw his children grow up to his joy and satisfaction. Years of anxiety and visitation followed. In 1896 Professor Holtzmann's eldest son died in the bloom of manhood, and in 1897 the companion of his life, Mrs. Holtzmann, followed her son, leaving the widower three other children, a source of joy to the father and a solace to his advanced years.

Professor Holtzmann took an active part in the struggles of the Church politics of his country, the billows of which rose high in the sixties. He was a member of the Baden General Synod, 1867-1871, and also of the House of Representatives. Moreover, he was one of the most prominent founders and leaders of the *Protestantenverein*.

His first great work was entitled *The Synoptic Gospels; Their Origin and Historical Character*, published in 1863, in which he established and proved the so-called "Two Sources Theory." This work, which gave the young professor a standing in the world of theology as a scholar of great ability, was followed by another, written in conjunction with his father-in-law, *The History of the People of Israel and the Origin of Christianity* (1867).¹

Professor Holtzmann now ventured on the slippery ground of New Testament Criticism and proved himself possessed of unusual acumen in his investigation of the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians,² proving the unauthenticity of the former and pointing out that the latter was a redaction by the author of the former.

To representatives of the old school it appears as though the critical attitude in theology were taken by progressive theologians out of sheer cussedness or for the sake of saying something new, but that is a great mistake. The critical attitude is forced upon them, and the whole movement of the Higher Criticism has originated in spite of its inaugurators and leaders. So it was with Holtzmann. Though he does not tell us of the struggles which preceded the change of his convictions, we can very well imagine what took place in his soul when we compare his first book, firm in the traditional dogmatism but uncritical, with his later, more scholarly works, more guarded in statements, less sure in the

¹ The first volume was written by Weber, and the second one by Holtzmann.

² *Kritik der Epheser- und Kolosser-Briefe*, 1871.

maintenance of the letter, but after all firm in the essential feature of religion, veracity.

Professor Holtzmann, no longer capable of blindly accepting views that he had imbibed in his childhood, felt urged to justify his position, which he did in 1874 in *The Right and Duty of Biblical Criticism*, and *Formerly and Now in Church and Theology*.

In the same year Professor Holtzmann wrote his pamphlet *The Naturalisation of Christianity in Rome* (1874).

After the death of Bunsen, Holtzmann edited the fourth, sixth and ninth volume of Bunsen's Bible work, in 1864 to 1870; and after the death of Rothe, the third, fourth and fifth volumes of Rothe's *Theological Ethics* (1870-71).

When Strassburg was reorganised as a German university, the Imperial German government endeavored to select the best men for the new institution, and for the chair of New Testament Theology Holtzmann was regarded as the best choice. He was called there in 1874 in the capacity of head professor, where he continued his literary labors in the following publications: *The Struggle for the Christian Idea of Creation* (1878); *Progress and Reaction of the Theology of Our Century* (1878); *The Pastoral Letters* (1880), in which he definitely proved that they had been written in the second century; *Textbook (Lehrbuch) of the Historico-Critical Introduction Into the New Testament* (third edition, 1891); and the *Textbook of the New Testament Theology* (1897).

The time of struggle in Church politics was now past; the rights of science in theology were generally recognised and Professor Holtzmann could concentrate himself upon the problems of New Testament exegesis. Henceforth the significance of his life lies in his labors carried on in the seclusion of his study among books and in the presence of devoted students.

The textbooks of Holtzmann have contributed much to make his name famous beyond the boundary of Germany. They are distinguished not only by fairness in summing up the arguments of scholars on the several subjects under discussion, but also by their precision and brevity.

In 1899, Holtzmann published an *Inquiry Into Rothe's Speculative System*. The Professor's recreations were journeys to Italy, which country he visited ten times, and his familiarity with the Capital of Lombardy and with its grand cathedral induced him to write a little sketch, entitled *Milan; A Walk Through the Town and Its History*.

In 1901, he published a collection of his sermons.

In co-operation with Zöpffel he published the *Lexicon of Theology* (second edition, 1888), and with Lipsius, Schmiedel, and Von Soden, a *Manual (Hand-Commentar) of the New Testament*, of which the first volume contains the synoptic gospels and the Acts (third edition, 1901), and the second volume contains the St. John literature (second edition, 1893).

Professor Holtzmann's literary activity is not limited to books; he has also written many book reviews, articles, and essays for theological, popular, and literary magazines on Church politics and other questions relating to religion and theology. His activity seems incredible when we consider the quantity of his literary labors which appeared in the *Allgemeine Kirchen-Zeitung*, the *Allgemeine kirchliche Zeitschrift* (published from 1860 to 1872), in the *Protestantische Kirchen-Zeitung* (published from 1854 to 1896); in the *Deutsche Revue*, in the *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, in the *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie* (1875-1892); in the *Historische Zeitschrift*, *Theologische Literatur-Zeitung*, in the *Deutsche Literatur-Zeitung*, in the *Göttinger Gelehrten-Anzeigen*, and in the *Protestantische Monatshefte*.

Since 1892, Professor Holtzmann has undertaken the editorship of a theological magazine of his own, the *Theologische Jahresbericht*, and when in 1894 the work grew beyond his strength, he called to his assistance Professor Krüger, who remained associated with him till 1899 and now edits the magazine alone. Professor Holtzmann has made it a point to review the entire literature of New Testament criticism and exegesis, as well as the life and history of the Apostolic Age.

* * *

I cannot help indulging here in a few comments upon the Higher Criticism of the Scriptures and its significance in the development of religion.

Most of the work of Biblical criticism has been done by theologians, and it is a remarkable fact that there are few among them, if any, who could in any sense be called infidels or unbelievers, or even liberals. The first great impetus to a scientific treatment of the Bible was given by Spinoza, but after the ball had been set a-rolling the detail work was done by men who, if they were not themselves orthodox, came, with rare exceptions, from the ranks of pious people, cherishing the creed and tradition of their Church. Infidels have only utilised for their own purposes the results of the Higher Criticism, which they have usually obtained from second or even third-hand sources. It is the believer who did the work.

And it is but natural that it should be so. A man who thinks that the Bible is rubbish will not waste his time on a study of its contents. He may give brilliant and witty discourses on the mistakes of Moses, but he will be satisfied with finding material for funny remarks and pointing out incongruities, survivals, crudities, traces of barbarism, superstitions, etc., and will not devote his life to the patient drudgery of deciphering the proper meaning of the Scriptures or solving the problems of their origin.

That the Higher Criticism, so called, is the work of men coming from the ranks of orthodoxy, is important for several reasons. It is not only an evidence of its reliability, but also of its intrinsic worth. It is true that these men frequently reached conclusions which they had not anticipated, nay, which at the start they had dreaded, but their religion has not become the worse for it. They remained as upright and truth-loving as before. Only their views have been widened; they have penetrated deeper into the mysteries of the religious development of mankind. They have grown beyond the narrowness of the traditional belief in the letter and have caught glimpses of the universality of God's dispensation in the world. In other words, Higher Criticism is not a foe to religion, but a step in advance, allowing us to take a higher aspect of the Scriptures which form the code of our sacred literature.

From the narrow point of view taken by those who believe the Bible from cover to cover to be a literal revelation of God, Ingersoll is justified in his ridicule and denunciations; but when we allow the light of scientific research to fall upon the abstruser and obscurer problems of these venerable documents, we will better understand the significance of the Scriptures, and thus our own religious views will be widened and purified in the truth.

The main question at issue is this: Shall we, or shall we not, employ the methods of science for an investigation of religious truth? Shall we forbid the voice of science to be heard in our religious life, and shall we insist on blind faith whether or not our creed be true; or shall we bow to truth and allow our beliefs to be modified by a correcter, more complete, more exact and better knowledge of the facts upon which we have taken our stand?

The old-fashioned orthodoxy is doomed, but it has not been either fruitless or useless. It represents a phase in the development of the religious evolution of man, which is as intrinsically necessary as teething is in the life of a child; and when the second teeth begin to form, it will be seen that they develop from the first ones and utilise the old material. If the first teeth were healthy,

there is a good chance that the second teeth will develop normally; but if the first teeth are rotten, the second teeth are apt to decay in their very germs.

* * *

On May 17, his seventieth birthday, Professor Holtzmann will look back upon a long and quiet but intensely useful life, and he must feel the satisfaction of having plodded and drudged through the intricate problems of the significance of our religious records with honesty and good judgment. We are glad to add that his health is good,—for his age extraordinarily so,—and that he still continues to attend to the current duties of his position. The influence which he has exercised upon the growing generation of theologians has been great, and it will continue to be a moulding power in all the ages to come.

Professor Holtzmann is, perhaps, more than any other theologian, a representative of the scientific spirit as applied to the study of the New Testament. A scientific investigation of the Old Testament has aroused the interest of large numbers who have become acquainted with the new discoveries made with the spade in Egypt and Assyria; but important though these Old Testament studies may be, the light which a scientific treatment will throw on the New Testament will in the long run prove of greater significance.

The work which Professor Holtzmann has carried to a certain completion is by no means finished; it will be continued, and the results of the movement which by one name is commonly called "Higher Criticism," cannot as yet be fully foreseen in all its details.

In tendering our best congratulations to the Coryphæus of New Testament Theology, we express the hope that he will continue in good health and enjoy the bright evening of his long life. No one will begrudge him the well-deserved recognition of the great work he has done.