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Reviews.



A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel. By HENRY PRESERVED SMITH. ("International Critical Commentary.") Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark. 1899. Price 12s.

AN understanding of the two Books of Samuel is, says Professor Smith, a first necessity to the scholar who would correctly apprehend the history of Israel. This is undoubtedly true; it is equally true that, from a variety of causes, such an understanding is not easy to attain. Many difficulties confront the student—a seriously corrupted Hebrew text, a complex literary development (probably extending over a considerable period of time), and a jumble of conflicting theories, none of them adequate, yet all claiming the sanction of the "higher criticism," which demand cautious treatment at the hands of a thoughtful commentator. Then, again, the duplication of certain incidents, and the notable divergencies, not only of style, but of point of view, require attention. Adjustment of such difficulties is no easy task; possibly, indeed, finality is unattainable. We therefore welcome any serious attempt to grapple with these critical and exegetical problems, and a word of appreciation for Professor Smith's painstaking volume is certainly due. On the whole, it may be safely said that the criticism of this portion of the Old Testament has been advanced a step by the commentator's labours. Professor Smith would deserve our thanks, if only for the fact that he has conveniently grouped together a number of useful critical annotations, tabulated in the small-type sections that occupy no inconsiderable space among the more purely illustrative and explanatory matter. The introduction is meagre, in our judgment; much of the explanatory commentary might with advantage have been curtailed by so enlarging the scope of the introduction as to contain such necessary items. Excellent are connecting paragraphs, giving the "argument" of the various chapters and sections of the book; less adequate, we think, are the "notes" proper, which might well have been increased by introducing more illustrative quotations from external sources. Comparison is the soul of criticism. The index is remarkably jejune; in fact, it affords little real help of any kind to the busy student.

Aids to Belief; being Studies on the Divine Origin of Christianity. By the Rev. W. H. LANGHORNE, M.A. Elliot Stock. Pp. 194.

There is much instructive matter in this book, but we cannot regard it in its entirety as likely to be of much assistance to an anxious doubter. A series of studies on the Divine origin of Christianity, intended as an aid to belief, might well have included much apologetic matter which Mr. Langhorne does not seem to have collected. A propagandist aim, too, would have justified some warmer exhibition of feeling than we can find here. Present-day doubt is not likely to be healed by eighteenth-century temperateness or nineteenth-century academicism. Apologetic requires animus, unless it is taken up as an intellectual exercise—a "study" not intended to be an "aid." A propagandist writer intending to help one to believe in the Divine origin of Christianity would hardly devote twenty of the 194 pages of his book to such a quasi-exkursus on the spurious Gospels as we find in Mr. Langhorne's third chapter. The excursus is interesting, but its apologetic utility, and indeed the value of the whole book, is marred by the want of a strong demonstration of the unmythical temper of the Evangelical records. The quotation from Renan on pages 46 and 47, and that from Graetz on pages 184-186, seem to raise points with which the text does not cope.