

correct text of ancient documents, is now generally called "textual criticism." Higher Criticism dealt with questions of authorship, dating, and unity. Thus the term in itself conveyed no idea of anything harmful.

As the modern age approached there was much interest in the study of ancient documents. Students were thrilled as a new universe seemed to open before them. The first impulse was to accept anything found in an ancient manuscript as necessarily true. Then scholars began to search for frauds among these manuscripts and Higher Criticism became a useful tool.

One of the earliest successes of the Higher Criticism was the discovery that the so-called "Donation of Constantine" was not genuine. For centuries this document had been taken as proof that the first Roman emperor who became a Christian had turned over a large part of Italy to the Roman bishop when he himself moved to his new capital at Constantinople. In 1440 Lorenzo Valla presented evidence that the "Donation" contains references to historical events that occurred several centuries later than the time of Constantine and therefore could not be genuine. Although there is considerable disagreement as to the perpetrator of the fraud and as to his purpose, there is now universal agreement about its fraudulent nature. Seven years after Valla announced his discovery, the Pope Nicholas made him an apostolic secretary. In the next century, after the Reformation had begun, Luther used Valla's discussion as part of his polemic against papal claims.

The name of Marco Polo is known to almost everyone today, while

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