**Biography of Ernest Renan**

**Ernest Renan - (1823-1892), French philosopher and theologian.**

Joseph Ernest Renan was given a scholarship in 1838 by F A. Dupanloup to join the seminary of St.-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet at Paris. Through the study of German theology, historical criticism, and Semitic languages he came to doubt the truth of Christianity These doubts led him in 1845 to leave the seminary of St. Sulpice.

His most notable writing was *La Vie de Jesus* (*Life of Jesus*), which appeared in 1863. Using the results of biblical criticism, he portrayed Jesus as a gifted itinerant preacher, but he was not the Son of God. Immediately Renan set about to enlarge the book, and the result was his *Histoire de Origines du Christiansme* (*History of the Origins of Christianity*; seven volumes 1863-1881). This major work embraced the early expansion of Christianity under the apostle Paul throughout the ancient world. Subsequently Renan penned a parallel work bearing the title *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel* (*History of the People of Israel*; five volumes).

Throughout his career, Renan made frequent forays to the Near East, where he participated in archaeological digs. He was called to the chair of Hebrew at the College de France in 1862, but he was summarily removed after the publication of his *Life of Jesus*. In 1870 he was reinstated to the post, and under the secularist Third Republic the skeptic Renan was elevated to be director of the college in 1879.