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time was to be kept in the background; its time was coming, but it was not yet. The eye of Jesus was to be held aloft. When a sailor is ascending the mast, his chance lies in looking up; if he looks down he will totter. Jesus had begun to climb His cross; He was preparing for Jerusalem. But to climb successfully it was essential that He should look up, not down. His eye must be filled with beauty ere He gazes on the spectacle of gloom. The Transfiguration was the strain of music which accompanied and sustained the march to death.'

And now we may see why Jesus had to 'accomplish' His departure. St. Luke's word is simply 'fulfil' (πλησοῦν). It had been written of Him; and He must fulfil the Scripture. But what had been written of Him? That He must die? It is appointed unto all men to die. In dying there is neither merit nor medicine. The merit is in the *exodus*, in the passion, cross, death, resurrection, and ascension. And so, when He took the disciples aside, it was not merely to tell them that He must die. It was to show them that He was to be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, thereby being foully betrayed by His own nation; that He was to be evilly entreated by them; and that after He was put to death He was to rise again on the third day.

It was the fulfilment of the Scripture. And it was more. It was the fulfilment of all the purpose of God from eternity, a purpose most particularly needed since sin entered into the world. For since sin entered into the world death was no exodus. The last thought connected with it was that of an exodus. It was an end rather than a beginning. It was darkness rather than light. It was bondage rather than liberty. But the very purpose of God in the exodus of Jesus was to make death henceforth an exodus for all men. He fulfilled His exodus at Jerusalem; and thereby, as Dr. Matheson has it, 'He led the children of Israel across a second Red Sea.'

The New Testament

IN THE LIGHT OF RECENTLY DISCOVERED TEXTS OF THE GRÆCO-ROMAN WORLD.[1]

By Professor Dr. theol. Adolf Deissmann, of the University of Heidelberg.

I. The Problem.

The nature of the problem before us—the illustration of the New Testament by recently discovered texts of the Græco-Roman world—requires perhaps a word of explanation, chiefly because it is not self-evident from the title of our investigation precisely which texts are meant. It will, however, be at once apparent that a study is proposed of the sources from which we are able to reconstruct the historical background of the New Testament and, consequently, of Primitive Christianity.

The historical background of Primitive Christianity is the ancient world, the ancient world in the widest sense of the term, Eastern as well as Western. Not alone the Eastern, and certainly not alone the Western world, but the one, great, civilized world around the Mediterranean, which under the Roman Empire displays a unified structure, so far as the Hellenizing and Romanizing of the East and the Orientalizing of the West had worked in the direction of unity.

Any one who wishes to reconstruct this great background to the transformation that took place in the world's religion, will have recourse particularly to the literatures of the imperial age, and to the literatures of the previous epoch, so far as they were living forces influencing the spirit of that age. Two groups of literary remains have especially to

[1] Translated from the Author's MS. by Lionel R. M. Strachan, M.A., English Lecturer in the University of Heidelberg.

be considered: on the one hand, the fragments of Jewish tradition preserved in the Mishna, the Talmuds, and other allied texts; and, on the other hand, the Græco-Roman writers of the Empire.

Great, however, as is the importance of all these literary materials, it is not of them that we are to speak here. A scholar might well make it his lifework to re-edit, with the resources of modern archæology, the splendid edition of the New Testament published a century and a half ago by Wettstein, with its parallel passages from Jewish, Greek, and Roman literature; but, all things considered, there are at present so many Christian and Jewish theologians engaged in investigating the ancient Jewish literature—the Christian with less prejudice, and the Jewish with better methods than formerly—and, similarly, there are so many busy workers employed on the Græco-Roman literature of the imperial period, that we are already acquainted with large portions of the literary background of Primitive Christianity. These literary remains, moreover, are in such high estimation that numbers of people are more or less unconsciously of opinion that the historical background of Primitive Christianity may be completely restored from the literature of the imperial age.

They forget that the literature, even if it were preserved in its entirety, is only a fragment, though an important one, of the ancient world. They forget that every reconstruction of the ancient world attempted by means of the literary texts merely is bound to be one-sided, and that comparisons drawn between Primitive Christianity and this fragmentary reconstruction of a fragmentary world may easily fail of success. Only a few years ago a scholar so acute and learned as Eduard Norden,[1] in an estimate of Primitive Christianity from the philological and literary points of view, set up contrasts between the Apostle Paul and the ancient world which are in fact nothing but contrasts between the non-literary prose and the artistic literary prose—contrasts that have nothing to do with the opposition between Primitive Christianity and the ancient world.

The following pages are to be regarded as an attempt towards supplementing the historical background of Primitive Christianity, and at the same time as a protest against overestimating the worth of the literary evidence. We shall sketch the importance of the non-literary evidence of the imperial period, *i.e.* the innumerable texts on stone, metal, wax, papyrus, wood, or clay which have been rendered accessible by the archæological discoveries and researches of recent years, so far as they belong to the period of the rise and first development of Christianity, say, from the time of Augustus to Diocletian or Constantine. These texts have been made accessible to us chiefly in the last century, the century of archæology and epigraphy, as it might well be called, but so far from their being exhausted, the recognition of their importance for the historical understanding of Primitive Christianity is still by no means general. The cuneiform inscriptions have been drawn upon for years by Old Testament criticism, and by a combination of good work and puffery the problem of 'the cuneiform inscriptions and the Old Testament' has become so popular, and has been so often handled, that the few scholars who have not yet committed themselves on this question ought really to form an alliance, in order to escape from an isolation that has become almost unbearable. Huge as the question is, we ought none the less to remember, amid the noise and dust of the great Babylonian work-ground, that the age which saw the rise of Christianity has also left written monuments, which as a whole possess an importance for the understanding of the New Testament similar to that possessed by the cuneiform inscriptions for the study of the Old Testament, save that the importance does not lie so much on the surface and is not so easily made plain to every distinguished layman.

In studying these monuments we have something more to do than merely to take the evidence of the witnesses for the Roman period. As a matter of fact the literary remains are supplemented by an entirely new group, of quite new importance historically. The literary remains are essentially the witness of the upper or cultured class; the lower class is seldom heard of, and where it chances to appear, as, for instance, in Comedy, it is generally seen in the light reflected on it from above. The old Jewish literature, it is true, has preserved, along with an excess of the cultured, learned, dogmatic element, much that belongs to the people—the rabbinical texts are a veritable mine for the folklorist—but the Græco-Roman literature of the imperial period can only

[1] *Die antike Kunstprosa vom VI. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis in die Zeit der Renaissance*, Leipzig, 1898. Cf. a criticism of this book in the *Theol. Rundschau*, 1902, v. pp. 66 ff.

be described as on the whole the reflex of the ruling, powerful, educated class; and this upper class has nearly always been identified with the ancient world under the emperors. Compared with Primitive Christianity, advancing from the East with the force of a volcanic eruption, this upper class presents the same enfeebled, senile appearance as every other upper class, and the signs of approaching dissolution are clearly visible. This observation, once made, was held to apply to the whole civilized world at the time of the new religious movement, and thus the gloomy picture originated which is usually drawn whenever the attempt is made to exhibit the ancient background of Primitive Christianity. But it is here that the great mistake has been made, the mistake of a fatal generalization. The upper class has been confounded with the whole body of society; Primitive Christianity—to vary the mode of expression—has been compared with an incommensurable quantity. The social structure of Primitive Christianity points emphatically to the lower, occasionally to the middle class. Primitive Christianity stands in but slight relationship to the upper class at the beginning. Jesus of Nazareth was a carpenter, Paul of Tarsus a tentmaker, and the testimony of St. Paul at the close of the first chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, as to the origin of his congregations in the lower class of the great towns, is one of the most important historical witnesses to Primitive Christianity. Primitive Christianity teaches the lesson taught by every return of spring-time, that the sap rises upwards from below. By its very nature Primitive Christianity stood contrasted with the upper class not at first as Christianity, but as a movement of the proletarian lower class. The corresponding pagan class is therefore alone commensurable with Primitive Christianity at the outset. This class, practically lost to the historian hitherto, has now, thanks to the discovery of its own written memorials, suddenly come forth from the rubbish-heaps of ancient cities, towns, and villages, and so loud and persistent are its cries to be heard, that it is absolutely necessary to accord it a quiet and fair hearing. This, in our opinion, is the widest, the most important significance of the non-literary texts of the imperial period—that they enable us to correct the one-sided view of the ancient world as seen from above, by setting us in the midst of the social class in which we must imagine St. Paul working, from which we must imagine Christianity making its first recruits. We must beware of pressing this statement; of course, among the inscriptions and papyri of this period there are plenty that did not originate in the lower class, but were the work of officials, generals, statesmen, magistrates, and wealthy persons. But along with these documents there are the innumerable testimonies left by the middle and lower classes, generally recognizable at once as such by their contents or by the style of language—true memorials of the popular dialect, memorials of the petty affairs of petty individuals.

In several respects these texts yield important results for the study of the New Testament. Not only does the discovery of fragments of ancient Christian papyri enrich our store of MSS. of the New Testament and other early Christian writings, —and the direct value of the new finds in this respect is considerable,—but the non-Christian, non-literary texts especially possess indirect value of a threefold order. (1) They teach us the proper *philological* appreciation of the New Testament and Primitive Christianity; (2) they give us hints for the proper understanding of the New Testament as *literature*; (3) as concerns the history of *religion* they afford valuable information by making clear to us the points of contact and difference between Primitive Christianity and the ancient world.

One whole group of texts has been deliberately omitted here, inasmuch as we shall in the main discuss only Greek and Latin evidence, to the exclusion of that in other languages, partly because to much of it the present writer could not give specialist treatment, but also because the great abundance of Greek and Latin texts imposes limitations. But we cannot refrain from mentioning one special class of evidence of the highest importance as regards the history of religion, namely, the numerous Semitic inscriptions from the province of Syria and the neighbouring lands to the East and North, which have made it possible to reconstruct, at least fragmentarily, the hitherto almost wholly unknown heathen cults existent in the first home of Christianity.

Before proceeding to our threefold task of demonstrating the importance of our texts in the history of language, of literature, and of religion, it will be necessary briefly to describe the texts themselves.

They may be divided, according to the material

on which they are written, into three main classes. The division is a mechanical one, but is advisable for the simple reason that the texts as published are generally so classified already. We have to speak (1) of the *inscriptions* on stone, metal, wax-tablets; (2) of the texts on *papyrus*; (3) of the texts on potsherds and wooden tablets.

1. Let us look first at the *inscriptions*. The majority of them are inscriptions on stone, but there are also inscriptions cast in bronze or scratched on lead or gold plates, besides a few wax-tablets, the wall-scribblings called *graffiti*, and the coins and medals. The inscriptions, numbering some hundreds of thousands, are found over the whole extent of the civilized Græco-Roman world, from the Rhine to the Upper Nile, and from the Euphrates to Britain. They have long been the objects of attention,[1] but the nineteenth century was the first really epigraphical period. The study of epigraphy is represented by two names above all others: August Böckh in connexion with the Corpus Inscriptionum Græcarum, and Theodor Mommsen with the Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum. Though the first-named corpus of Greek inscriptions is now out of date and is being replaced by fresh collections on the same extensive scale, yet without this first great attempt at systematization the brilliant development of Greek epigraphy would not have been possible. The stock of inscriptions has been considerably increased by systematic excavations undertaken by great societies, and the student of the New Testament follows with especial interest the reports of the Austrian archæologists on the site of ancient Ephesus, those of the Germans at Pergamus, at Magnesia on the Mæander,[2] and other cities of Asia Minor, and those of the Americans at Corinth.[3] The new corpus of the Greek inscriptions of Asia Minor planned by the Vienna Academy is awaited with keen interest, for a large portion of the background of St. Paul's missionary journeys, and of the congregational life of the Primitive Christians, will be recoverable from this corpus. The collection entitled *Orientis græci inscriptiones selectæ*, edited by Wilhelm Dittenberger, and distinguished by the accuracy of its texts and commentary, is already a mine of information for Biblical scholars.

One fact occasionally detracts from the value of the inscriptions; they are often polished, artificial in phrase, cold as the marble on which they are inscribed, and stiff as the letters which the hard stone is fain to bear. On the whole they are far less fresh and naïve than the following group, which therefore, at least from the philological point of view, is the most important.

2. The *papyri*.[4] The sheet of papyrus was one of the most important writing materials in antiquity. It derives its name from the papyrus plant. This plant (*Cyperus papyrus*, L., *Papyrus antiquorum*, Willd.) occurs at the present day in Egypt, in Sicily, especially near Syracuse, and also in Lake Trasimene, and is cultivated probably in most botanical gardens. The papyrus has been used as a writing material from very ancient times. According to Kenyon,[5] the oldest inscribed papyrus that has been preserved is a sheet of accounts from the reign of Assa, king of Egypt, whose date is approximately 3580–3536 B.C. From this remote time until late in the period of the Arab occupation of Egypt papyrus was the classic writing material of the Wonderland of the Nile—it has a history of roughly 5000 years. Though appearing, to the superficial glance, brittle and perishable, it is, in fact, as indestructible as the pyramids and obelisks, and the resurrection of

[1] Even in the interests of New Testament philology. It deserves to be remembered that even in the eighteenth century there was a theologian who turned Greek inscriptions to account in New Testament work: Joh. Ernst Imm. Walch, *Observationes in Matthæum ex græcis inscriptionibus*, Jena, 1779. In later times the English scholars, E. L. Hicks, Bishop Lightfoot, and most especially W. M. Ramsay, deserve honourable mention.

[2] The inscriptions of Pergamus [and in part those of the islands of the Ægean] have been investigated, as regards their bearing on the interpretation of the New Testament, by the present writer, *Neue Bibelstudien*, Marburg, 1897 (= *Bible Studies*, pp. 171–267, Edinburgh, 1901; second edition, 1903): those of Magnesia on the Mæander have been similarly investigated by Gottfried Thieme, *Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Mäander und das Neue Testament* (a Heidelberg Dissertation), Göttingen, 1906.

[3] Among the first inscriptions from the American excavations, published by B. Powell in the *Amer. Journ. of Archæology*, 1903, 2nd ser. vol. vii. No. 1, there is an inscription (No. 40) of importance for Ac 18[4]. It was probably once part of an inscription over a gate [συν]αγωγὴ Ἑβρ[αίων].

[4] Cf. the article by the present author on 'Papyri' in the *Encycl. Biblica*, iii. cols. 3556 ff., (London, 1902), which has here been made use of, also the article on 'Papyri,' by F. G. Kenyon in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, Suppl. Vol. pp. 352 ff.

[5] *The Palæography of Greek Papyri*, p. 14.

ancient Egypt in our own times is largely owing to this wonderful toughness of the papyri.

There are plenty of false statements current about the manufacture of the sheets of papyrus. Even Gregory[1] writes that they were made from the 'bast' of the plant. That is not correct. Of the method of manufacture we possess a description by the elder Pliny,[2] which is rendered still more intelligible by the technical examination of the extant papyri. On this authority Kenyon[3] states as follows:—The pith of the stem of the papyrus plant was cut into thin strips, which were laid vertically side by side in the form of a sheet for writing. Above this was laid a horizontal cross-layer of the same strips. The two layers were glued together with a preparation in which the Nile water played a certain part. The sheets thus obtained were pressed, dried in the sun, and polished to remove any inequalities in the surface. They were then ready for use.

Even at the present day sheets of papyrus are made in a similar fashion. Professor Adalbert Merx informed the present writer that he met with a lady in Sicily in the autumn of 1902 who had learnt the manufacture of papyrus sheets from her father, and who still occasionally practised the art.

Considering the great importance of the papyrus in ancient life it is not at all remarkable that it is mentioned in Holy Scripture. The plant itself is named in Job 8^{11} and Is 35^{7}. Small boats of papyrus are mentioned in Ex 2^{3} and Is 18^{2}. As writing material it is mentioned by the author of the Second Epistle of St. John: the χάρτης in v.[12] is no doubt a sheet of papyrus. When, further, in 2 Ti 4^{13}, the writer asks for τὰ βιβλία, but especially for τὰς μεμβράνας, doubtless by βιβλία papyrus books are to be understood.

Let us now glance at the recent discoveries of papyri and their importance to scholars.

Since 1778, when an unknown European dealer in antiquities bought from Egyptian peasants a papyrus containing documents of the year 191–192 A.D., and saw how the peasants set light to some fifty others for the sake of the aromatic scent of the smoke,[4] the mysterious soil of the ancient civilization on the Nile has presented us with a vast wealth of papyri written in all sorts of languages and ranging over several thousand years. Between 1820 and 1840 a considerable number of papyri from Memphis and Letopolis in Middle Egypt, from This, Panopolis, Thebes, Hermonthis, Elephantine, and Syene in Upper Egypt, reached the European museums, but were not noticed by many scholars, and were read and made use of by very few indeed. Neglecting the single finds of other years, we come to the great discoveries in the Middle Egyptian province of El Faijûm in the year 1877. Then it was that the numerous mounds of ruins and rubbish-heaps north of the capital of the province, Medinet el Faijûm, the ruins of the ancient city called ἡ τῶν Κροκοδείλων πόλις, and later ἡ τῶν Ἀρσινοϊτῶν πόλις, yielded hundreds and thousands of precious leaves and fragments of leaves. From this time onward one great find has succeeded another, and we are even now in the midst of an important period of discovery. The most remarkable external feature of the discoveries is the fact that most of the papyri are turned up with the spade from the Egyptian rubbish-heaps. Just as excavations are undertaken for the foundations of ancient temples and for prehistoric potsherds, so now they are undertaken for papyri. Their being found in the rubbish of ancient cities gives a valuable hint as to their general character. We must regard the masses of papyri from Faijûm, Oxyrhynchus-Behnesa, etc., not as the relics of great archives, as they were at first thought to be, but as the remains of ancient rubbish-shoots, where ages ago the discarded files of documents from public and private offices, worn-out books and fragments of books, and such-like were thrown, there to await in tranquil repose the unsuspected fates in store for them.

The great bulk of the papyri are of a non-literary character: legal documents of the most various kinds, *e.g.* leases, accounts, and receipts, marriage contracts and wills, attestations, official edicts, petitions for justice, records of judicial proceedings, and a large number of documents relating to taxes, then letters and notes, exercise books, charms, horoscopes, diaries, etc. etc. The contents of these non-literary fragments are as varied as life itself. The Greek fragments, number-

[1] *Textkritik des Neuen Testaments*, i. 7, Leipzig, 1900.

[2] *Nat. Hist.* xiii. 11–13. The description has been popularized by Georg Ebers in his *Kaiser Hadrian*. Cf. also Ebers, 'The Writing Material of Antiquity,' *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, New York, November, 1893.

[3] *Palæography*, p. 15.

[4] Wilcken, *Die griechischen Papyrusurkunden*, p. 10, which is also to be compared for what follows.

ing many thousands, embrace a period of about a thousand years. The oldest go back to early Ptolemean times, *i.e.* the third century B.C.;[1] the most recent carry us far into the Byzantine period. On these papyri the whole eventful history of Græco-Roman Egypt in those thousand years passes before our eyes. These Greek MSS., together with a large number of Demotic, Coptic, Arabic, Latin, Hebrew, and Persian, to say nothing of the old Hieroglyphic papyri, possess an importance for the study of antiquities, in the widest sense, about which there should be no possibility of a difference of opinion. They enable us to revive a long period of ancient life. They testify to the actual conditions of the past with a truth and candour that can be claimed for no ancient writer and for but very few ancient inscriptions. The ancient authors, even in the best of cases, have come down to us through several hands, and are liable to be more or less 'doctored' and 'improved.' The inscriptions are often cold and lifeless as the stone that bears them. The papyrus is something much more lifelike: we see the handwriting, the crabbed characters; we see the men who wrote them; we gaze into the nooks and crannies of private life, for which history has no eyes and the historian no spectacles. These plain, unpretentious scraps of papyrus come as a stream of new, warm blood reanimating the history of law in the first place, but also the history of civilization in general, and more particularly the history of language. And, paradoxical as it seems to many, the non-literary papyri have more value than the literary for the great task of historical investigation. By all means let us rejoice when the soil of Egypt presents us with ancient books and fragments of books, especially when it restores to us lost pearls of literature. But for scholars the real treasure in the field of the Egyptian peasants is not the relics of ancient art and literature hidden there, but the relics of ancient life, in all its actuality, tangible actuality, only waiting to be requickened. It is therefore to be regretted that while every scrap of an ancient book is treated with veneration and immediately published and reproduced in facsimile, even if it is only a fragment of one of the writers who are deservedly forgotten, the non-literary pieces, on the other hand, are often only published in part. A single trifling lease may, for instance, contain a verbal form constituting the long-sought link between some form in the early Κοινή and a form in a modern Greek dialect derived from it.

A word or two is necessary about published papyri. Their number is legion. They are named after the place where they are now kept (*e.g.* the Berlin, London, Paris, Geneva, Heidelberg, Strassburg, Leipzig, and other papyri),[2] after their owners (*e.g.* the Archduke Rainer's Papyri and the Amherst Papyri), or after the places where they were found (*e.g.* Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Tebtunis Papyri). The last method is undoubtedly the most scientific, and would always be possible where large quantities of papyri have been found at one place and afterwards kept together. In any case, it should never be forgotten in citing a single papyrus, to state the place and time of its being written; the excellence of these texts as sources depends in no small measure on the fact that to a large extent they can be dated to the year and the day, and that their place of origin is nearly always determinable. The compilation of a Corpus or several Corpora Papyrorum is reserved for the future; at present it is impossible to collect the results of discoveries that are still in progress.[3]

In view of the exaggerated esteem in which literary texts are held, it is not surprising that theological students have felt themselves chiefly enriched by the fragments of Biblical and early Christian books. It is certainly true that we have every cause to be grateful for the increase of our store of sources and textual apparatus from the venerable primitive age of our faith. The most important of the Greek fragments are enumerated in the above-named articles by Kenyon and the present writer. It must be admitted that the direct additions to our knowledge by these literary finds are very considerable. But of this we will not speak here; our subject deals with the value of the non-literary papyri, with the indirect results yielded

[1] There has even been found recently a Greek literary papyrus of the fourth century B.C., *The Persians* of the poet Timotheos, edited by U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Leipzig, 1903. As reported by F. Blass in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 1903, 655, B. Grenfell considers that the MS. was written between 330 and 280 B.C.

[2] Of late papyri have also been acquired by numerous American libraries and museums; cf. the list in vol. iv. of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, pp. 265–271, London, 1904.

[3] A new and excellent bibliography of the papyri and the literature founded on them is that by N. Hohlwein, *La papyrologie grecque. Bibliographie raisonnée* (*Ouvrages publiés avant le 1er janvier* 1905), Louvain, 1905. He notices over 800 papyrological works.

by these texts to Biblical research. With this the following chapters will be concerned. It may, however, be mentioned in these introductory remarks that as early as 1841, H. W. J. Thiersch, in his work *De Pentateuchi versione Alexandrina*, pointed out the importance of the then almost unknown papyri for the study of the Septuagint; and that the papyri have been made use of for the Septuagint and the New Testament, by P. W. Schmiedel in his revision of Winer's *Grammar*; by the present author in his *Bibelstudien*, *Neue Bibelstudien*,[1] and other writings; by F. Blass in his *Grammatik des Neutestamentlichen Griechisch*; by James Hope Moulton in many excellent essays in *The Classical Review* and *The Expositor*, and most recently in the brilliant first volume of his *Grammar*;[2] by W. Heitmüller,[3] Th. Nägeli,[4] and other scholars.

3. Closely related to the papyri is the third main group[5] of texts, the inscribed potsherds, or *Ostraca*. Here we are speaking of an infant science, borne hitherto on the shoulders of two men, U. Wilcken, of Halle, and W. E. Crum, of London. The former laid the foundations in his brilliant work entitled *Griechische Ostraka aus Ægypten und Nubien*;[6] the latter, in his *Coptic Ostraca*,[7] contributed new material, of importance also to the Greek scholar.

What are ostraca? Inscribed potsherds. Why has no notice been taken of them before? 'Only bits of earthenware and smoked cigar-ends are absolutely worthless,' writes Pastor von Bodelschwingh in the ninth annual report of a society for collecting 'unconsidered trifles' for the Bethel Institute near Bielefeld. So thought the Egyptian peasants also, at least with regard to the potsherds, when the miserable remains of earthenware vessels fell into their hands while overhauling ancient heaps of ruins, only to be thrown away immediately. And many a European specialist must have been fully persuaded of the worthlessness of ancient potsherds, even when they were marked with written characters, or why were they for a comparatively long time practically ignored by investigators? What is there more contemptible than an earthen potsherd? The pathetic irony of the prophet found no expression of the insignificance of man more appropriate than the metaphor of the potsherd among the other potsherds.[8]

Before Wilcken's book appeared few of us were aware that the potsherds in ancient times were not only thrown away, but often found their way back from the rubbish-heaps to the houses and cottages to serve as writing material for the lower classes. We had heard at school of the judgment of Cleisthenes by potsherds, but were generally left with the impression that ostracism was a special invention of the Athenian statesman, and that for the purpose of voting he had had small clay writing-tablets manufactured. Meanwhile three of these Cleisthenes-ostraca have been found at Athens, and at least two of them prove without doubt to be fragments of vessels. Wilcken then shows with luminous proofs that the use of ostraca for writing on may be regarded as customary at Athens at least as early as the sixth century B.C., and that in the Mediterranean lands generally the potsherd was a favourite writing materal in ancient times. For the Hellenistic period this is proved by several quotations from the writers of the time, and further by the thousands of inscribed potsherds of the same date safeguarded for us by the hot, dry soil of Egypt, to which we also owe the preservation of the papyri for thousands of years. As a consequence of the changes of race in the valley of the Nile these potsherds are covered with all kinds of writing, native Egyptian (Hieratic and Demotic), Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Coptic, and Arabic.

The Greek ostraca, extending over a period of about a thousand years, from the time of the first Ptolemies until the beginning of the Arab dominion, have so far proved the most numerous. They are inscribed with texts of the most varied contents—letters, contracts, accounts, orders to pay, edicts, and even copies of classical authors. Roughly speaking, therefore, the inscribed ostraca supply

[1] Both in English as one book, *Bible Studies*, Edinburgh, 1901; 2nd ed. 1903.

[2] *A Grammar of New Testament Greek, based on W. F. Moulton's edition of G. B. Winer's Grammar.* Vol. I. Prolegomena. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906).

[3] *Im Namen Jesu*, Göttingen, 1903.

[4] *Der Wortschatz des Apostels Paulus*, Göttingen, 1905.

[5] As for the other smaller groups (wooden-tablets, wax-tablets, etc.), what is here said about the inscriptions on stone, the papyri, and the ostraca, applies *mutatis mutandis* also to them.

[6] Two volumes, Leipzig, 1899. Cf. the review in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, 1901, xxvi. cols. 65 ff.

[7] London, 1902; cf. V. Hilprecht, *The Sunday School Times*, 1902, No. 42, vol. 44, p. 560.

[8] "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! a potsherd among the potsherds of the earth!" (Is 45^{9}, R.V.).

us with the same sort of texts as we already possess in such astonishing abundance in the papyri, except that from the nature of things the texts or potsherds are generally shorter than those on papyrus. Most of the ostraca consist of receipts for taxes.

No less than 1624 of these humble documents of antiquity have been published by Ulrich Wilcken in the second book of his great work. Of these, 1355, not previously published, had been brought to light by himself, with immense pains, in the museums of Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, Turin, Leyden, etc.,[1] as well as in private collections. A task of the greatest difficulty awaited the editor in the decipherment of the cursive handwriting on these ostraca, elaborated as it often is to a grotesque degree and employing innumerable abbreviations and ligatures, but the acknowledged skill of the decipherer of the Berlin Papyri proved brilliantly equal to the demands made upon it. Thus these homely texts are now in the hands of scholars, not altogether freed from puzzles and mysteries, but available without any trouble for the purposes of research.

The ostraca are in a still greater degree than the papyri documents of the lower class of the population. The potsherd was the cheapest possible writing material, such as everybody could fetch for himself from the rubbish-heap free of cost. The ostracon was therefore considered below the social dignity of well-to-do people; and it is interesting to note how in many Coptic letters that are written on potsherds[2] the writers beg their correspondents to excuse their having to use an ostracon for want of papyrus. The embarrassment of these polite persons is matter of congratulation for us, for the ostraca lead us into the very midst of the class of society in which Primitive Christianity took root.

Having given a short account of our texts, we we will now proceed to place our venerable Holy Book beside the open pages of the folios that deal with the inscriptions, the papyri, and the ostraca. We are thus restoring the New Testament from its Western exile to its Eastern home, taking it from the domain of our modern civilization, that has founded hundreds of professorial chairs for the learned exposition of this one small Book, and placing it again in the society of unlearned and unsophisticated men. Let us hear what these witnesses from the society in which the New Testament had its origin have to say to the scholar who makes that Book his study.

[1] The University Library of Heidelberg also came into possession of a large collection of ostraca in 1905.

[2] Cf. Crum, *Coptic Ostraca*, p. 97.

For Mine Own Sake.

By the Rev. C. S. Macalpine, B.D., Manchester.

'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake (לְמַעֲנִי), and will not remember thy sins.'—Isa. xliii. 25.

This is a text which might be, and in fact by many preachers practically is, transferred bodily from the Old to the New Testament. It is one of the sunlit peaks of the O.T. Revelation, perhaps the highest of them all, from which the saint of old could see across into the Promised Land he was not privileged to enter. It is a word instinct with the life and with the love of God.

We may be justified—I think we are—in throwing back on this great passage the light of fuller revelation. But we shall be better able to do that rightly if we understand its place and meaning in the Old Testament.

Of the fact that God forgives sin there can be no doubt in the mind of any believing reader of the Bible. The wonder of the fact becomes every day more wonderful to the devout heart. The abundance of the Divine forgiveness is witnessed by a thousand passages of Scripture, among which this text has ever held a foremost place. But *why* God forgives, with all the light the Scriptures throw upon it, remains a mystery still,—indeed, a deepening mystery as we get to understand sin and to know ourselves. The phrase 'for mine own sake' lifts a little corner of the veil and helps us to know, even if we can hardly say that it helps us