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542ND ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN THE ROOMS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS,
ON MONDAY, MARCH 17TH, 1913, AT 4.30 P.M.

J. W. THIRTLE, ESQ., LL.D., OCCUPIED THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and signed. The Secretary announced the election of the Rev. George Denyer as an Associate.

The CHAIRMAN explained that owing to advancing years, distance, and many occupations, Dr. Flournoy was not able to read his paper himself, and called upon the Secretary to read it for him.

(Dr. Thirtle's further remarks will be found at the end of the paper.)

*THE BEARING OF ARCHÆOLOGICAL AND
HISTORICAL RESEARCH UPON THE NEW
TESTAMENT.* By the Rev. PARKE P. FLOURNOY,
D.D.

IT should be remembered, in discussing this subject, that history and archæology cannot *directly* establish the truth of the statements of the New Testament, except in a few cases. Research in these two spheres may, however, remove such obstacles in the way of belief as have been placed there by assertions to the effect that the book could not have been written in the first century, alleging that parts of it bear marks of second century production.

Thus, it will be seen that the advocate of the historical truth of the New Testament is at a distinct disadvantage, since historical and archæological research can only yield probable results for him, while, for the objector, it may seem to furnish absolute proof of the inaccuracy of historical statements in the New Testament. If it can be shown that one of these writings contains accounts of events which are known to have taken place in the second century, or unmistakably implies the existence of conditions which are known to have existed in the second century, and not to have existed in the first century, this can be pointed to as positive proof that the book of the New Testament containing such

statements was not written in the first century (unless, indeed, the convenient "redactor" could be brought in and charged with tampering with the text).

On the other hand, if archaeology and history should be found to show that these writings, indicating such familiarity with places, persons, opinions, religious conditions, governmental intricacies and changes, characters of prominent individuals and peoples, and, in short, the whole atmosphere of New Testament times, are invariably correct in their references to these things, as only writings of contemporaries could be, it will be hard to believe that they did not originate in those times.

Again, if the *progress* of such research should not diminish, but, as it proceeded, should reveal ever-increasing agreement with all these conditions as seen in the New Testament, we should find ourselves observing a continual approach to moral certainty of the genuineness and authenticity of all the writings of which this should prove to be true.

If, under the searching eyes of criticism, it should appear to be ascertained that the New Testament writings are spurious, there must arise from the Christian world the cry of anguish, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" But if, on the other hand, archæological discoveries and closer scrutiny should be found, more and more clearly, to establish their genuineness, it will be seen that Christian faith rests, not on myths and theories, but on the basis of well-attested facts.

Archæological discoveries bearing on the New Testament in various ways have been very numerous during the last half century. The question is, do these discoveries, as well as earlier ones, tend to strengthen or to weaken confidence in the New Testament?

I. DOCUMENTS.

Among the great number of such discoveries, not the least important are documents containing words of the New Testament. The fact that there are more than three thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, and a large number of versions in various languages, besides voluminous quotations from it in the works of ancient authors, is of no small interest and importance. No other book is attested so fully from such sources.

As to their age, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, D.Litt., Ph.D., Director and Principal Librarian of the British Museum, tells us:

“We owe our knowledge of most of the great works of Greek and Latin literature—Æschylus, Sophocles, Thucydides, Horace, Lucretius, Tacitus, and many more—to manuscripts written from 900 to 1,500 years after their authors’ deaths; while of the New Testament we have two excellent and approximately complete copies at an interval of 250 years.”

The *number* of manuscripts of the Latin and Greek classics bears no comparison with that of manuscripts of the New Testament. He adds:

“Of the New Testament we have more than 3,000 copies (besides the very large number of versions).”

(For fuller account see his articles in *Harper’s Magazine*, numbers for August and November, 1902.)

In beginning the investigation, we will briefly trace the history of some of the documents containing the whole or parts of the book itself, in the language in which it was originally written, or in translations of it, or of parts of it.

The discovery by Tischendorf, in the St. Katharine Convent, on Mount Sinai, of a codex containing a large part of the Old and New Testaments in Greek, need only be mentioned, as (together with the Vatican manuscript) confirming the general accuracy of the Greek text of the New Testament, and as stimulating that spirit of research which has been so fruitful in results from the time of that remarkable discovery to the present. When we turn to the discovery of documents which have additional evidential value concerning the New Testament, we will do well to look, first, at one which was made generally known by Ciasca, a “Lector” of the Vatican Library.

i. THE “DIATESSARON.”

To appreciate fully the importance of the discovery and publication of the *Diatessaron*, a harmony of the Four Gospels, composed by Tatian, the Greek philosopher, born in Assyria, and converted to Christianity under Justin Martyr in Rome, about fifty years after the death of the Apostle John, it is well for readers to recall the fact that, up to a little more than a quarter of a century ago, the Gospel bearing that Apostle’s name was almost universally discredited by Higher Critics. The chief mover of this antagonism to the Fourth Gospel was Ferdinand Christian Baur, Professor in the University of

Tübingen, and founder of the so-called Tübingen school of criticism.

Assuming the impossibility of miracles and of the supernatural in general, and then adopting the Hegelian theory of every set of opinions as passing through three stages—affirmation, contradiction, and reconciliation (thesis, antithesis, synthesis), Baur endeavoured to account for the origin of the New Testament writings by supposing that they developed in a purely natural way by this rule. He acknowledged the four “greater” epistles of Paul—Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, and Galatians—as productions of that Apostle, as the evidence forced him to do, and placed them in the first period, that of “affirmation.” But, according to his theory, the Four Gospels must have originated in the second century, the first three in the period of “contradiction” or controversy, and the Fourth Gospel in the period of “reconciliation.” This last period, according to him, extended from 160 to 170 A.D.

The Tübingen theory thus made all the Gospels spurious productions, written by unknown persons instead of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. According to Baur and his followers, the case of the Fourth Gospel was the most desperate of all. But something like the Titanic’s distressful fate was to occur to this very popular theory in its rapid course through the cold waves of scepticism. In spite of warnings, it kept on its way and impinged on a very stubborn fact—the existence of the supposedly non-existent *Diatessaron*—on the *Diatessaron* itself, indeed. The wreck was complete, and the shattered theory now lies buried as in unfathomable depths.

This was the way of it :

The author of *Supernatural Religion*, some time before the publication of the *Diatessaron*, with what was intended to be biting sarcasm, said “No one seems to have seen Tatian’s *Harmony*, probably for the reason that *there was no such book.*”

Lightfoot’s reply showed from quotations from the *Diatessaron* by Syriac authors at several periods that this was untrue. Yet, as the book seemed to have been irretrievably lost, it was impossible to say what its contents were, and what was its value as a witness for the Gospels, from which it was said to have been composed.

The mystery was soon to be solved. Many passages of Syriac literature showed that Ephraem Syrus, who died in 373 A.D., wrote a commentary on it. In 1876, the year following the sarcastic reference to the work by Mr. Walter Cassells, the author (as is now well known) of *Supernatural*

Religion, Dr. Georgius Moesinger, of Salzburg University, published this commentary of Ephraem Syrus at the request of the Mechitarist fathers of S. Lazaro monastery. Forty years before this, the Armenian Mechitarist fathers had published, in their language, the works of Ephraem Syrus, in which his commentary was included. But, up to that time, this fact had not been generally known. Moesinger put it into Latin, following and correcting Aucher, who had previously translated it, and published it separately from the other works of Ephraem Syrus; yet it was comparatively unknown until Dr. Ezra Abbott called attention to it in his work on the *Fourth Gospel* in 1880.

The author of *Supernatural Religion* came to know of it, but boldly asserted that "it is obvious that there is no evidence of any value connecting Tatian's Gospel with those of our canon." A crucial test of the truth of this assertion almost immediately appeared. Professor Zahn, with the help of Moesinger's work, and the homilies of Aphraates, which contained much of the *Diatessaron*, published a reconstruction of the *Diatessaron* in 1881, and it was clearly seen that it was made up from the four Gospels. This was not all. There was an Arabic manuscript in the Vatican library, marked XIV, which was a translation of the *Diatessaron* itself. It had been there for a long time. Joseph S. Assemani had brought it to Rome from the East about 162 years before. Ciasca had known of it a few years before the publication of Zahn's work. He was urged to translate and publish it; but did not do so immediately.

The delay was an advantage; for Ciasca showed it to the Visitor Apostolic of the Catholic Copts in Egypt, the Most Rev. Antonius Marcos. On examining it, this ecclesiastic informed Ciasca that a gentleman in Egypt had such a translation of the *Diatessaron*. This was, subsequently, sent to Rome, with the inscription: "*A present from Halim Dos Chali, the Copt, the Catholic, to the Apostolic See, in the year of Christ 1886.*" This Arabic translation, though it differed from that in the Vatican in some respects, was of great value in supplying the place of two leaves lacking in the first, as well as some passages in it which had become illegible.

Ciasca, using the two, finished his translation into Latin in time to present it to the Pope on the occasion of the celebration of his Jubilee in 1888. Now we have translations in English, one, with notes, by Professor Hope W. Hogg, from the Arabic, and an earlier one by B. Hamlyn Hill from Ciasca's Latin, which he named *The Earliest Life of Christ*.

The importance of the discovery and publication of the *Diatessaron* can hardly be over-estimated. In it we have all that is told us in the Four Gospels.* With all its peculiarities of expression, due to mistakes of translators and transcribers, there is nothing which can be traced to any of the many Apocryphal Gospels. It was composed from our four Gospels. The Gospels are skilfully interwoven† to give a continuous account of our Saviour's works and teachings, and its first words are from that Gospel which has been most disputed—the Gospel of John—while a much larger portion of this Gospel than of any other is incorporated in it.‡ Its author is a well-known character, the philosopher Tatian, the companion of Justin Martyr. This fact dates the *Diatessaron* within narrow limits. Tatian carried it in Syriac to the people of that tongue as early as 172 A.D., and Dr. Sanday thinks it not improbable that a rough draft of it had been made during Justin's lifetime, and used by both Justin and Tatian in Rome.

Justin suffered martyrdom in 163, and both he and Tatian were born during the generation following the death of the Apostle John, and probably in the earlier half of it, as Justin had become an eminent man before the half century following the Apostle's death expired. Tatian is supposed by some to have been older than Justin, his teacher in Christian truth. Both could have known, and in all probability did know, many who knew the last Apostle. It is certain that they knew a large number of Christians who were younger contemporaries of the Apostle. The fact, then, that Tatian prepared a harmony of the Four Gospels, using the very words of these Gospels, with no Apocryphal ingredients (as Ebed Jesu, the Syrian author, expressed it, "and of his own he did not add a single saying"), surely points to the Four Gospels as universally recognized as the sacred records of the life and teachings of our Lord, just as they were in the time when Irenæus wrote his *Against Heresies* (183 A.D.); and that no other so-called Gospels were thus recognized and generally used.

* The genealogies were probably omitted in the Syriac, though they are found in the two Arabic MSS.

† Glancing down a page of the *Diatessaron*, I find all four Gospels drawn on to make four lines.

‡ According to a careful estimate of Professor G. F. Moore the *Diatessaron* contains 50 per cent. of St. Mark, 66 per cent. of St. Luke, 76·5 per cent. of St. Matthew, and 96 per cent. of St. John. (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Allan Menzies, D.D. The Christian Literature Co., N.Y., vol. ix, p. 29.)

There is another respect in which the *Diatessaron* has practically settled much-discussed questions about the Gospels. It is the bearing which it has upon quotations from, and references to, the Four Gospels in the *Apologies* and *Dialogue* of Justin Martyr. The *Diatessaron* shows plainly that what Justin called "*the Memoirs of the Apostles*" (or "Apostles and their Companions," as he puts it in one place, and adding in reference to them "which are also called Gospels") were none other than our Four Gospels. These he speaks of as being read in the public worship of the Christians of his day (*Apology* I, 67) along with the writings of the prophets, showing that the Gospels were regarded as Sacred Scriptures just as the writings of the prophets were.

Professor M. Maher (*The Month*, London, November, 1892) sums up the evidence thus:—

"If Tatian, knowing the whole church as he did [he travelled to various countries in his diligent search for philosophical and religious information], devoted himself to the construction of an elaborate harmonized Gospel narrative, in which the paragraphs, texts, and fragments are interwoven with the utmost pains and ingenuity, and the very greatest care directed to the preservation of even the smallest word of our Four Gospels, it can only be because these Four Gospels, or at least part of their contents, had before this time been received by the Church as a sacred deposit of divine truth."

As to the text of the Gospels as interwoven in the *Diatessaron*, Harnack remarks (*Encyc. Brit.*, Article "Tatian"):

"As regards the text of the Gospels we can conclude from the *Diatessaron* that the text of our Gospels about the year 160 already ran essentially as we now read them."

Thus the *Diatessaron* shows us that there was no process of Gospel evolution at that period at least; the Gospels were then a finished product.

As Professor Rendel Harris finds that "Justin quoted, at least at times, not from our separate Gospels, but from a harmony of the Gospels" (*Diatessaron of Tatian*, p. 54), and Dr. Sanday says (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 301, note) "It would not be improbable that some sort of rough draft might have been used by both master and scholar before its publication," it seems quite natural to suppose that the *Diatessaron*, in its first form, was composed from Greek Gospels, as Harnack supposes from its Greek name, even as both Justin and Tatian were Greeks,

though born, the one in Sychar in Samaria, and the other in "the land of the Assyrians." If this was so, it was done during the thirteen years while the two were in Rome, that is, between 150 A.D., when Tatian became a Christian under Justin's guidance, and 163 A.D., when Justin suffered a martyr's death under Marcus Aurelius. Some time after Justin's death, Tatian carried it to the Syriac-speaking people in their own language.

This Gospel harmony in Syriac was composed, Professor Harris feels sure, from the Gospels which had already been translated from the Greek into Syriac. The question, then, is, are there traces of the existence of the Gospels in Syriac from which this could have been done?

ii. SINAI SYRIAC "PALIMPSEST."

Another remarkable archæological discovery comes to our aid in endeavouring to answer this question. Two Scotch ladies, residing at Cambridge, who have received high degrees from universities in Great Britain and on the Continent, and have been called by a high authority "the most learned ladies in the world," made a remarkable journey in 1892, and one of them made a remarkable discovery in the St. Katharine Convent on Mount Sinai. These twin sisters, Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson, went on camels to this "Mount of God," and there Mrs. Lewis found the Sinai Syriac *Palimpsest* with which her name will always be associated.

With the assistance of Mrs. Gibson, photographs of these Gospels were taken and conveyed to Cambridge, where, after a partial examination, they were pronounced to be a second copy of the Curetonian Syriac Gospels. Further examination proved this to be a mistake; but the *Palimpsest* was found to be older than the Cureton MS., and this, of course, added to the value of the discovery. On a subsequent visit the sisters, with the assistance of three professors of Cambridge University, deciphered and copied the Gospels as far as possible; and subsequently Mrs. Lewis translated them into English.* Later visits were made in order to settle some readings about which there was uncertainty, and to decipher, if possible, some passages which had been considered illegible.

This was a notable discovery, and its value for the history of

* *A Translation of the Four Gospels from the Syriac of the Sinaitic Palimpsest*, by Agnes Smith Lewis. London: C. J. Clay and Sons, Cambridge University Press Warehouse, Ave Maria Lane, 1896.

the text of the Gospels has impressed the foremost New Testament scholars of the day. This is by no means strange. The *Palimpsest* contains all Four Gospels, with the names Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John at the top of almost every page. Its age is a point of prime importance. One indication of this is its relation to the *Diatessaron* composed from the Four Gospels in the period 150-172. It is said by Syriac scholars to contain a number of readings, or turns of expression, which are peculiar to this *Palimpsest*, and the natural inference is that Tatian, who was of Greek parentage but born in Assyria, composed the *Diatessaron* in its final form in Syriac from these Syriac Gospels found in the *Palimpsest*. Professor Adolf Harnack, in a notable article published in the *Preussische Jahrbücher*, May, 1898, after speaking of the discovery of the *Apology of Aristides* by Professor Rendel Harris, and of the *Diatessaron of Tatian*, says:—

“But of still greater value was the find which we owe to a learned Scotch Lady, Mrs. Lewis. . . . As the text is almost completely preserved,* this *Syrus Sinaiticus* is one of the most important witnesses; nay, it is extremely probable that it is the most important witness for our Gospels.”

A very elaborate and learned article in the *Church Quarterly Review* (London) for April, 1903, after considering the discussions of Hjelt, Gwilliam, Zahn, and Burkitt on the dates of the four oldest Syriac versions of the Gospels, places them in the following order as to age:—

1. The Lewis *Sinaitic Palimpsest*; 2. *Diatessaron*; 3. *Curetonian*; 4. *Peshitta*. If the Lewis *Palimpsest* is older than the *Diatessaron*, Harnack is certainly right in his estimate of the value of this discovery; for it shows us all Four Gospels already translated into a different language from that in which they were written.

One of the scholars named above, Professor Arthur Hjelt, of Helsingfors University, has made a recent visit to the St. Katharine Convent to clear up remaining doubts about

* Seventeen pages of what seems to have been a total of 301 pages of this manuscript were missing, and have never been recovered. The Lewis Sinaitic Syriac manuscript is thus found to contain all the four Gospels except these seventeen pages, and such passages as Mark xvi, 9-20; John v, 4, and vii, 53 to viii, 11, omissions found in the oldest Greek MSS. These omissions are regarded as among the evidences of the very early origin of this version.

readings of the *Sinaitic Palimpsest*, and he is confirmed in his opinion that it is the oldest of the Syriac versions.

Mrs. Lewis, in an article in *The Expositor* for July, 1911, says—

“Scholars are generally agreed, I believe, in thinking that the *Curetonian* text is a revision of the *Sinai* one, and the *Peshitta* a further revision, made probably by Bishop Rabbula, in the beginning of the fifth century” and that “it was done to bring the Old Syriac into harmony with the Greek MSS.”

She goes on to say that—

“Dr. Friederich Blass and Dr. Adalbert Merx, amongst those who have left us, and amongst the living, Drs. Hjelt and Heer, all of whom have studied it closely, think that the *Diatessaron* came between the *Sinai* MS. and the *Cureton* MS., and that, therefore, the Old Syriac represents the earliest translation of the Gospels into any language.”*

As to the character of the text of the *Sinaitic Palimpsest*, Professor Rendel Harris remarks, in his brilliant article in *The Contemporary* for November, 1894, that it is—

“A text that often agrees with the most ancient in Greek MSS., a text which the most advanced critic will at once acknowledge to be, after allowance is made for a few serious blemishes [these are in the first chapter of Matthew], superior in quality to all extant copies, with a very few exceptions.”

This shows that the theory of a gradual evolution of the Gospels is untenable. We should remember, too, that the *Palimpsest* is a copy of a *translation* from the Greek, and that the Greek original was earlier than any translation of it could be. Yet Professor Harris concludes that this Syriac version “must have been made far back in the second century.” The Greek must have been farther back still.

Such a translation for the use of the Syriac-speaking Church surely would not have been made, unless these Four Gospels had been fully accepted as the records of our Saviour’s life and teachings, and it is unreasonable to suppose that they would have been thus accepted by the Church without Apostolic approval.

* “Let us take for granted, provisionally, that the *Sinai* form of the Old Syriac is anterior to the *Diatessaron*, and is, therefore, the oldest of the versions. We then understand why Mark xvi, 9-20, is absent from it, though present in the Arabic translation of the *Diatessaron*, and in the *Cureton* MS.”—Mrs. Lewis in *The Expositor*, July, 1911.

iii. THE APOLOGY OF ARISTIDES.

During the year following the publication of the *Diatessaron* by Ciasca, another remarkable discovery occurred at the St. Katharine Monastery, where Tischendorf had found the *Sinaitic Codex* in 1849, and where Mrs. Lewis, accompanied by her sister, Mrs. Gibson, was to discover the *Sinai Syriac Palimpsest* of the Four Gospels on February 8th, 1892. In the spring of 1889, Professor Rendel Harris found among the Syriac manuscripts there the *Apology of Aristides*, a document which was well known and widely distributed in the time of Eusebius, who tells us that "This work is also preserved by a great number even to the present day." He had just spoken of the *Apology* of Quadratus, which was presented to Hadrian, according to Eusebius, in the eighth year of his reign. Eusebius (*Ecl. History*, Book IV, Chapter iii), tells us—

"To him Quadratus addressed a discourse, as an apology for the religion we profess, because certain malicious persons attempted to harass the brethren. The work is still in the hands of some of the brethren, as also in our own, from which any one may see evident proof, both of the understanding of the man and of his apostolic faith."

In another place (*Ibid.*, Book III, Chapter xxxvii) he speaks of him as "of the first rank of the Apostolic succession," shows that he was a devoted missionary, and, what is of more special interest in our present inquiry, that when he went abroad to preach "to those who had not yet heard the faith," he and his companions "delivered unto them the *books of the holy Gospels*." In speaking of his defence of the Christians, he says—

"Aristides, also, a man faithfully devoted to the religion we profess, has left to posterity a defence of the faith addressed to Hadrian. This work is also preserved by a great number, even to the present day."

What a flood of light the *Apology* of Quadratus would pour upon this time of triumphant progress and intense suffering, if it should be discovered, as that of his fellow apologist has been! We can only hope for this, and turn to the consideration of that of Aristides, the converted Greek philosopher, who is thus spoken of in a mediæval martyrology, which gives his Saint's Day as August 31st—

"The blessed Aristides, most renowned for faith and wisdom, who presented books on the Christian religion to the Prince Hadrian,

and most brilliantly proclaimed in the presence of the Emperor himself how Christ Jesus is the only God."

When we come to examine the *Apology* we find it, in large part, an argument against heathenism in various forms among different races, and a proclamation of the Triune God. Let us hear Aristides on this subject, speaking, as he did, so long before Athanasius—

"Now, the Christians trace their origin from the Lord Jesus Christ: and He is acknowledged by the Holy Spirit to be the Son of the Most High God, who came down from heaven for the salvation of men; being born of a pure virgin, unbegotten and immaculate, He assumed flesh and revealed Himself among men that He might recall them to Himself from wandering after many gods, and having accomplished His wonderful dispensation, by a voluntary choice, He tasted death on the cross.

"And after three days He came to life again, and ascended into heaven. And, if you would read, O King, you may judge the glory of His presence from the *Holy Gospel Writing*, as it is called among themselves."

In speaking of the Apostles, Aristides tells of one of them who "traversed the countries about us." When we remember that Paul preached in these countries, and then look at the short sketch (only ten verses) of what he said to the Stoics and Epicureans on Mars Hill, and then turn to this *Apology* and see what this philosopher, now become a Christian, says about the Christians in whose behalf he was now appealing to the Emperor, it looks very much as if he referred to Paul.

Paul told the philosophers of seeing an altar to "the unknown God," and says, "What, therefore, ye worship in ignorance that set I forth unto you." Likewise Aristides, in his *Apology*, earnestly sets forth the doctrine of the true God, in opposition to the prevailing polytheism, and that in the language of Pauline Trinitarianism, speaking of the three Persons, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. His words, speaking of the Christians, are—

"For they know God, the Creator and Fashioner of all things through the only-begotten Son and Holy Spirit, and beside Him, they worship no other God."

Paul argued against idolatry; and so does Aristides. Paul spoke of God as the Creator "of the world and all things therein." Aristides begins with the greatest of subjects, the true

God, and speaks of Him as "the God of all, who made all things."

Paul asserted to his unbelieving audience the reality of the resurrection; and so does Aristides.

Paul spoke of the judgment and of Christ as the Judge; and we find Aristides saying—

"So shall they appear before the awful judgment, which through Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is to come upon the whole human race."

Paul tells the Athenians of their failure to worship the true God who, he tells them, "is Lord of heaven and earth," and that he "dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as if He needed anything, seeing that He giveth to all life and breath and all things." Paul was speaking to philosophers at Athens, and the Athenian philosopher Aristides, speaking of these philosophers, says—

"Herein, too, they err in asserting of Deity that any such thing as deficiency can be present to it, as when they say He receives sacrifice and requires burnt offering and libation and immolations of men and temples. But God is not in need, and none of these things is necessary to Him."

It appears quite probable that this sketch of Paul's address, recorded in Acts xvii, was in the mind of Aristides as he wrote this *Apology*.

That Aristides was familiar with the book of Acts is indicated in another way by the form of two quotations from ch. xv, 20, 29. One is the negative form of the golden rule. In the Harris Syriac, section xv, we find the expression: "and whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them they do not to others." This is noted by Seeberg of Berlin as an instance of "Western corruption of the text of Acts xv, 20." Connected with this, we find the statement that "of the food which is consecrated to idols they do not eat." Seeberg concluded that this was in the copy of the Acts used by Aristides, and that it indicates that the Acts was in "ecclesiastical use," and that by the time of Aristides it was "an ancient book, handed down from the Apostolic age." (See Professor Rendel Harris' *Four Lectures on the Western Text*.)

But, without the textual criticism of specialists, the ordinary reader can see, in almost every sentence of the part of the *Apology* in which the character of the Christian community is set forth, especially, indubitable indications of the writer's acquaintance with books of the New Testament.

For instance, in Col. i, 17, we have, "By Him all things consist." Aristides says, "Through Him all things consist."

In Romans i, 25, we find the expression, "served the creature rather than the Creator." Aristides says the heathen "began to worship created things instead of their Creator."

James iii, 17, describes Christian "wisdom" as "gentle and easy to be entreated." Aristides says, Christians "are gentle and easy to be entreated."

In Romans ix, 3, we find, "My brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh," and in viii, 5, "not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Aristides has, "Brethren not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Peter, speaking of the Epistles of Paul (II Peter iii, 16), says, "As also in all his Epistles . . . in which are some things hard to be understood." Aristides, having told the Emperor of "the Holy Gospel Writing," says, "There are found in their *other writings* things which are hard to utter and difficult for one to narrate."

In Hebrews ii, 5; vi, 5, we have the words "the world to come." Aristides speaks of those who seek "the world to come."

John in Rev. i, 1, speaks of "the things which must come to pass hereafter," and (i, 19) received the command from the Lord, "Write . . . the things which shall come to pass hereafter." Aristides tells the Emperor, "Since I read in their writings, I was fully assured of these things, as also of things which are to come."

Paul repeats God's promise (Heb. x, 16): "I will put my laws in their heart, and in their mind will I write them." Aristides says of the Christians that they "have the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself graven upon their hearts."

Paul exhorts Christians (II Cor. ix, 7) to give "not grudgingly." Aristides says, the Christians give "ungrudgingly."

In I Pet. i, 23, we find the regenerate described as "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Aristides says, "Let all that are without the knowledge of God, draw near thereto [*i.e.*, 'to their doctrine'—'the gateway of light'] and they will receive incorruptible words."

John, the beloved disciple, says, "Let us love one another." Aristides says of the Christians, "And they love one another."

When we find these expressions, all, or nearly all, of them occurring in a small part of the *Apology*, the far larger part being occupied with descriptions of opposing religious systems, we are impressed with the fact that the thought of Aristides

is saturated with ideas and expressions found in the different books of the New Testament from the Gospels to the Revelation. Hence we cannot but assent to Harnack's view that the discovery of the *Apology* "is a find of the first importance."

It must be plain to all that what Aristides calls "The Gospel," "the Holy Gospel Writing," "their Writings," "their Other Writings," contain what we read in our New Testament to-day.

As to the date of the presentation of the *Apology* to Hadrian, there can be little doubt that it was, as Eusebius states in his *Chronicon*, in the eighth year of this Emperor's reign, *i.e.*, in 124 or 125 A.D.

Aristides' frequent mention of what he calls "the Holy Gospel Writing," which the Emperor is again and again entreated to read, is significant just here. As it is not improbable that the Four Gospels had already been translated into that Syriac version of which we have a copy in the *Sinai Syriac Palimpsest* discovered by Mrs. Lewis, this "Holy Gospel Writing," the "Books of the Holy Gospel," distributed by Quadratus and other evangelists, were, in all probability, the Four Gospels, quoted by Justin Martyr and interwoven to make the *Diatessaron* by Tatian.

The contention of the German rationalistic Tübingen school that the Gospels were not all written before 170 A.D., has been thoroughly refuted, not by arguments, but by archæological discoveries. Even Harnack, once a follower of Baur, has said (*Die Chronologie der Altchristlichen Literatur*, Introd., p. 8 f.), "The presuppositions of the Baur school can now be fairly said to have been entirely discarded," and adds—

"Yet there is left in Biblical criticism, as an inheritance from that age, an undefined captiousness of a kind practised by a trickster lawyer, a petty fault-finding method [pettifogging] which still clings to all manner of minor details, and from these, argues against the clear and decisive facts of the case."

iv. THE GOSPEL OF PETER.

In a grave at Akhmin in Egypt was found in 1886 a part of the so-called *Gospel according to Peter*.

In the fifth edition of a book which may be called the American echo of *Supernatural Religion*, the theory is advanced that this was an original Gospel, written before any of our four, but suppressed by ecclesiastical authority, the canonical

Gospel according to Mark taking its place. The author refers to the order of Serapion, Bishop of Antioch, forbidding its use at Rhossus, because of its Docetic character. Facts, however, are more reliable than theories with no facts to sustain them. This fragment is found, even by the (by no means conservative) writer of the introduction to it in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. ix, to be dependent on all four of our Gospels; and Dr. Sanday, of Oxford University, says of it (*Bampton Lectures*, p. 301, note), "The Apocryphal Gospel of Peter is based on our Gospels." Of the author of it, he says, when he leaves our Gospels, "It is very plain when he begins to walk by himself."

Referring to some quite eccentric features of the production, he remarks—

"In all these ways, the contrast between the apocryphal Gospel and the canonical Gospels is marked. The latter are really 'a garden enclosed.'"

I think that few who examine this "Gospel" will think differently. Thus this early apocryphal Gospel is seen to be a witness for the canonical Gospels, though the author seems to have written it with the design of leading his followers away from them by giving a different view of the Person of our Lord from that which these Gospels had presented.

V. OTHER DOCUMENTS FROM EGYPT.

Other documents have been discovered in Egypt. The two young Oxford scholars, Grenfell and Hunt, in 1897, in excavating in the rubbish heaps of Oxyrhynchus, created a sensation in the learned world by the finding of a papyrus leaf, apparently from a book, containing *Logia* (or sayings) of Jesus.

In it, and in others subsequently found, there are echoes of the sayings of Christ recorded in the Gospels, though much distorted; yet one, on the first leaf discovered, is identical with a saying in the Gospel of Luke. This papyrus has been declared by some experts to have been written "not later than the year 200 A.D." Other "sayings" suggest Matthew's and John's Gospels.

These obscure and faint echoes of the teaching of our blessed Lord impress us with the value of the "Sayings" in the Gospels, recorded, and not left to the chance of distortion by oral transmission.

But along with these *Logia* there were discovered verses from the Epistle to the Romans, and two pages of the Gospel

of John, besides remains of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, fragments from Thucydides, and other classical writers.

The most interesting, probably, of all these finds was a leaf of the Gospel of St. Matthew. This page of the Gospel according to St. Matthew is so nearly identical with the corresponding passage in the Greek of Westcott and Hort that it took the keen eyes of Professor Rendel Harris to discover the difference between them. He thinks that he can make out an apostrophe on this page which is not found in the Westcott and Hort text! A copyist might try his hand on the Greek of either of these texts, and he would prove himself skilful if he succeeded in producing a copy as exact as one of these is of the other.

Dr. Winslow, Secretary of the Egyptian Exploration Fund, says of this fragment—

“Its date is fixed by some experts at 150 A.D., and by the editors of the Society's publications at fifty or sixty years later.”

This fragment of the Gospel, a century and a half older than our two oldest Greek MSS., the Tischendorf Sinaitic and the Vatican, and evidently copied from the same older exemplar, is of no small value, not only as a witness of the practically correct Greek text as now presented by the latest criticism, but as showing that the Gospel was not undergoing an evolutionary process at that early date.

Of the two pages of the Gospel of John, discovered at the same place, Dr. Winslow says—

“The fragment of St. John's Gospel forms an important portion, small though it be, of a book of about fifty pages containing that Gospel, dating about 200. We have St. John i, 23–41, except that verse thirty-two is wanting: also St. John xxi, 11–25, except that verse eighteen is missing. . . . The papyrus belongs to the same class with the Vatican and Sinaitic codices.”

vi. THE REFUTATION OF ALL HERESIES.

The last document to which attention will be directed was discovered long before those which have been mentioned, but as it gives in some ways a more comprehensive view of the early history of the whole New Testament than any of them, it may well take its place at the conclusion of our survey of documents which archæology has caused to shed light on this wonderful Book.

In 1842, M. Villemain, Minister of Public Instruction under Louis Philippe, sent Minoides Mynas, a Greek scholar, to search

libraries in the East for yet undiscovered ancient manuscripts which might be concealed among the heaps of useless material. The result was that he came back with a rare treasure in his hands. It was the *Philosophoumena* (or *Refutation of all Heresies*) of Hippolytus. The book was found of great interest as throwing an unexpected and truly astounding light on the Church in Rome in his time. Bunsen (*Hippolytus and His Age*, vol. ii, page 139) finds Hippolytus quoting or referring to every book of the New Testament except the Second Epistle of Peter. This exception is evidently an oversight, for we find Hippolytus using the expression, "returning to wallow in the same mire," which is evidently from II Peter ii, 22: "The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Bunsen says (*Ibid.*, p. 144), "The expressions of Hippolytus on the paramount authority of Scripture on all matters of faith and doctrine are as strong as those of the Reformers." Looking into the writings of Hippolytus we find that this is no exaggeration.

Now we are to remember that Irenæus, the teacher of Hippolytus, has exactly the same view of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments alike, and that Irenæus sat at the feet of Polycarp, who was a contemporary of the Apostle John for more than thirty years, and was his devoted pupil. Thus, the testimony of Hippolytus comes through Irenæus and Polycarp from the last of the Apostles. This clearly indicates that the New Testament writings came down with Apostolic Authority.

Here we may pertinently ask the question, Why do we believe that books written a century before our times were written by those whose names they bear? We have no depositions, with a notary's seal on them, of witnesses who saw the writers at their work. We believe because contemporaries of these writers received them as their productions, and the readers who succeeded them down to our own time have suggested no doubt as to their authorship. This is so with the ordinary book which may be of no vital importance to those who received and passed it on.

The case of the writings which form the New Testament is much stronger. They present facts and teachings which those receiving them *did* consider of vital interest to themselves and others—so vital that thousands were willing to lay down their lives as a testimony of their faith in the truth of them. Such writings surely would not have been received by them and

laboriously circulated, amid untold dangers, as they were by such as Quadratus (in whom we see one of a multitude of devoted messengers), if there had been the slightest doubt of their authorship and authority.

But archæology shows us these writings coming down, not only with this general stream of blood-sealed testimony, but in a distinct and direct current in it.

Another document, the Muratorian Fragment, discovered by Muratori in 1740, containing a list of the New Testament books, has in its proper place the Gospel of John. This is in keeping with the abundant evidence we have already examined of the existence and universal acceptance of the Fourth Gospel as a part of Holy Scripture.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ITS ENVIRONMENT; OR THE SETTING OF THE JEWEL.

We will now turn to a class of archæological discoveries more closely linked with history than the documents we have been considering. It is true that in the case of some of the documents, archæology and history unite in bearing witness. Tatian, Aristides, Justin, and Hippolytus are historical personages, so that their testimony is that of witnesses that are known, speaking at a definite period. Thus, the *Diatessaron*, the *Palimpsest*, the *Apology*, and the *Refutation* are writings of periods that are known, and their testimony is dated. But the dates of the New Testament writings are indicated by other discoveries.

(1) GEOGRAPHICAL.—For lack of space the geography of the Holy Land can only be referred to, with the remark that the progress of archæological research has tended constantly to make clearer the fact that the writers of the New Testament were intimately acquainted with its localities, its political divisions and peculiarities of soil, climate and productions. The more it is searched and scientifically examined, the fuller grows the evidence that this is the setting—the only possible setting in all the world for this record of the mission of Him who was born in Bethlehem, was reared in Nazareth, was crucified at Jerusalem and ascended from Olivet. History and archæology combine in confirming the Gospels, which show Him to us in that Holy Land (as said the dying king), “Over whose acres walked those blessed feet, which fourteen hundred years ago were nailed, for our advantage, on the bitter cross.”

Without any attempt at classification, we may well look at some of the occurrences recorded in the Gospels and the Acts,

and referred to in the other books, just as a reader opening the New Testament at the beginning and reading through it would come to them, and see whether there is consistency, or inconsistency, with other historical records, and archæological finds.

(2) ENROLMENT.—The first case to meet us is one which has given rise to much discussion. The time of the birth of Christ is stated (Luke ii, 1) as being “in those days” when “there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled.” Then the statement is added, “This was the first enrolment made when Quirinus was governor of Syria.” No small difficulty has been experienced in reconciling this statement with the historical fact that Quirinus was governor of Syria from 6 to 9 A.D. Abbot Sanclemente and Zumpt made discoveries which led some scholars to think they had made it clear that Quirinus was *twice* governor, and that the first enrolment took place during his earlier occupancy of this position. But Tertullian had stated that Sentius Saturninus was governor at that time (*Ag. Marcion*, bk. IV, ch. xix.)

Now the matter is made plain. Saturninus was the *civil* governor but Quirinus was commander of the forces in Syria and Cilicia before the birth of Christ; and Sir Wm. M. Ramsay has proved that it was “the Roman custom for a general engaged in a frontier war, as the direct representative of the Emperor, to rank superior to the ordinary governor, who carried on his civil duties as usual.”* (*Was Christ born in Bethlehem?* p. 241.)

The fact is now thoroughly established that Augustus ordered a periodic census, or enrolment, to be taken all over the empire every fourteen years, and here we find an instance of such census—taking in Luke’s account of the nativity. History shows us plainly that this was no invention of Luke’s to get Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, but rather a fully-established fact.

It has been denied that there was any requirement to go to one’s “own city” to be enrolled. But, when we remember the tribal organization of the Jewish nation, and the policy of the Roman administration to allow races to adhere to their age-long customs as far as possible, the probability of Joseph and Mary’s going to Bethlehem to be enrolled is clear. Moreover, it is

* It should be noted here that it is not stated (in the Greek) that Quirinus was “governor”—ἡγεμῶν. The words are ἡγεμονεύοντος τῆς Συρίας Κυρηναίου. The verb means primarily “to lead, especially an army, hence to rule, command.” See Liddell and Scott’s Greek Lexicon. Naturally, it came also to mean to command or rule in a city, so that this is a secondary, while the former is more in accordance with the primary, signification of the verb “to lead.”

stated, on the authority of Sir Wm. M. Ramsay, that "an old order from the Prefect in Egypt, dated 104 A.D. has been recently found, commanding all persons living at a distance to return to their nomes* for the then approaching census."

(3) **ARCHELAUS.**—The plan of Herod to slay the infant Christ, and his cruelty in commanding the slaughter of the infants at Bethlehem, are in full accordance with his character as seen in the pages of Josephus. The account which Matthew gives of Joseph's fearing to return to Bethlehem because he was informed that Archelaus reigned in Judea after Herod's death, has a clear explanation in the fact that Archelaus had shown that he had inherited Herod's cruelty as well as the throne vacated by his death. His slaughter of more than three thousand Jews in Jerusalem† shows that Joseph's fears were very natural.

The fact that Joseph went with Mary and the babe to Galilee was due to the fact that Archelaus did not inherit the dominion of his father there, Galilee and Perea having been assigned to Herod Antipas, another son of Herod.

(4) **JOHN THE BAPTIST.**—There is a remarkable agreement in the account given of the preaching of John the Baptist and his execution by Herod, in Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, v, 2), and that given in the Gospels. Josephus speaks of him as "John called the Baptist," and says, "For Herod slew him, who was a good man and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism, etc." Josephus also tells of Herod's agreement to divorce his wife and marry Herodias.

(5) **RULERS.**—Luke introduces his account of the preaching of John the Baptist in the manner of a very accurate historian, dating it in a year which he marks with exactness by introducing the names of seven persons then in authority in various capacities, the Emperor Tiberius being the first mentioned with the year of his reign designated. Is it found that any mistake has been made?

These seven persons are spoken of as contemporaries, and occupying certain offices at a designated time, and among them, Annas and Caiaphas are spoken of as the "high priests." There was only one high priest at a time. Is it not a mistake to speak of two at the same time? History shows us that there is no mistake here. When we find that Annas had been appointed high

* Provinces, or minor divisions.

† *Antiquities of Jews*, XVII, ix, 1-3; *Bell. Jud.* II, i 3.

priest by Quirinus and afterwards deposed by Gratus, that his son, and later, his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, were placed in this position, so that, for this period, the high-priesthood was a sort of family inheritance, and then find from the Gospel of John that Christ was brought first before Annas and then before Caiaphas, the explanation is clear.

The way in which the whole political situation is presented in the Gospels and the Acts indicates that the writers were perfectly familiar with it. This familiarity is shown, not by laboured descriptions or historical disquisitions but in the perfectly natural allusions which show the historical setting of the events of the great mission of Christ and those He sent forth to proclaim it.

(6) DIVISIONS.—We find in Luke iii, 1-3, that the former dominions of Herod (the Great) were divided in certain ways, and ruled by different persons in different capacities—Judea being under the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, Galilee under Herod Antipas, Iturea and Trachonitis under Philip, his brother, and Abilene under Lysanias. Tacitus (*Hist.* V, 9) and Josephus (*Ant.* XVII, xi, 4, and *Ant.* XVIII, vi, 10) furnish a parallel account.

The relations of the Jews to the Samaritans, with whom John tells us they “had no dealings,” are dwelt on at length by Josephus, who shows us some very strong reasons for the mutual antipathy. (*Ant.* XI; IV, 6; II, 1; XII, v, 5.)

The accurate knowledge of the political conditions, which were remarkably complicated, together with the hints as to the characters of different persons in authority, their relations to Rome, to the Jewish people and to one another, shown by the writers of the Gospels, as of persons living among these conditions, is a very clear indication that these are truthful and contemporary records.

(7) JEWISH SECTS.—The picture presented in them of the Jewish sects, such as Pharisees and Sadducees, of temple usages, of religious opinions and discussions as to ceremonial observances, baptisms before meals, uncleanness contracted by entering the house of a Gentile or in the markets, and above all, about the expected Messiah and his kingdom, all impress us with the fact that these things so artlessly and naturally presented were matters of common observation and experience with the writers.

When we read on, we find in “their other writings,” as Aristides calls them, marks of a larger contact with the world outside the Holy Land, and have many more opportunities to

test the accuracy of them in their accounts of the beginning of the great work of giving the Gospel to the heathen world. Only a few of these tests can be examined in the remainder of this short essay.

(8) **DISPERSIONS.**—In the second chapter of the Acts we read a familiar passage telling us of the Jews and proselytes who had come to the first Pentecostal feast after the crucifixion, which had taken place at the preceding Passover. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Lybia, Rome, Crete, and Arabia are mentioned.

A letter of Agrippa I. to Caligula (Rawlinson, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 248) reads as follows—

“The holy city, the place of my nativity, is the metropolis, not of Judea only but of well-nigh every other country, by means of the colonies which have been sent out from it from time to time—some to the neighbouring countries of Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, Cœle-Syria—some to most distant regions, as Pamphylia, Cilicia, Asia, as far as Bithynia, and the recesses of Pontus, etc.”

(9) **HEROD AGRIPPA I.**—This same Herod Agrippa, who, Josephus shows us, reigned over the whole of the dominions of his grandfather, Herod the Great, figures largely as an enemy of the Church in the twelfth chapter of the Acts.

“Now, about that time, Herod, the King, put forth his hand to vex certain of the Church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword, and, when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also.”

In the latter part of the same chapter the brilliant scene in Cæsarea is described, in which the sentence of death in a terrible form came to him in the midst of his glory, when he was hailed as a god by the great assembly.

When we turn from this account to that which Josephus gives (*Ant.* XIX, viii, 2) we have a very similar account of Herod's sin and his dreadful death. Few accounts of an historical event given from standpoints so different agree better than these two of a notable event which occurred in the year 44 A.D.

As in studying the Gospels and the earlier chapters of the Acts we find the writers familiar with all the conditions of the times, localities, modes of life, religious parties and opinions, changing forms of government and rulers, whether Herodian, Roman, or strictly Jewish, so we will find just as perfect a

Similar correspondence with conditions revealed by archæological and historical research may also be found in the Epistles and Revelation* ; but without going into particulars, we must content ourselves with turning to the conclusions of one who has very thoroughly examined these details, and is recognized as a very high authority—probably the very highest authority, on the geographical and historical setting of the writings of the New Testament—the archæologist and historian, Sir Wm. M. Ramsay.

(18) LYSTRA.—

He says of the Acts—

“The book could not have been written in the second century, as the later nineteenth century scholars declared . . . because it is inconsistent with the situation of Asia Minor in the second century . . . It is stamped as a document of the first century on the ordinary canons of criticism, and marked as originating from contemporary records by its vividness and individuality.”

In this connection, Professor Ramsay tells us how, beginning as a Higher Critic, under the guidance, as a student, of Professor Robertson Smith (who led out *more* than four thousand men into a wilderness, which the most of them, alas, never found their way out of), a comparatively unimportant fact arrested his attention and caused a complete change of view—

“The detail that first caught my attention was a slight matter in itself, but just the sort of small incidental, unimportant circumstance by which date and knowledge or ignorance are tested. In Acts xiv, 6, Paul and Barnabas are said to have fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe. No one could speak thus who did not know that the boundary of Lycaonia was so drawn that, in going from Iconium to Lystra, Paul crossed the frontier and entered the district of Lycaonia.”

A change was made, however, early in the second century, he tells us—

“And Lystra became separated from Lycaonia and closely connected with Iconium, and it formed a part of the division to

infatuation ; but being citizens of Rome, I directed them to be carried thither.”—Pliny's *Letters (to Trajan)*, vol. ii, pp. 249, 280. EDITOR.—“It was one of the privileges of the Roman citizen, secured by the Sempronian law, that he could not be capitally convicted but by the suffrage of the people, which seems to have been still so far in force as to make it necessary to send the persons here mentioned to Rome.”

* See Professor Sir Wm. M. Ramsay's “Letters to the Seven Churches.”

which Iconium belonged. There ceased, then, to be a frontier between Iconium and Lystra; and Acts xiv, 6, could not have been written later." (Lecture before the Victoria Inst., vol. xxxix.)

This is but one example to which many others might be added. Professor Ramsay has spent years in investigations in Asia Minor, and his conclusion is that—

"It is the same with everything in the travel narrative of Acts. The narrative is direct from experience of the localities and districts and boundaries as they were when the journeys were made."

What is true of the Acts he also finds true, in this respect, of the Synoptic Gospels.

(19) BETHESDA.—It can hardly be said that indications are lacking that the Apostle John also composed his Gospel from notes taken at the time of conversations and events recorded. The long discussion between the Jews and our blessed Lord, recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters of his Gospel, especially make this impression. And then we find written in the fifth chapter, v. 2, the statement, "Now there is (ἐστίν) in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches." The sheep gate (or market) and the five porches could not have been there after the destruction of Jerusalem.*

But, however this may be, the fact that the writer was an eye-witness, as he claims to be, is clearly shown by his familiarity with the whole environment of this marvellous Gospel.

We should keep constantly in mind the fact that the testimonies cited in this discussion are independent of each other. They are not like links in a chain which parts if one link be broken. They are rather to be compared with the strands of a great hawser, the weakest of which, instead of weakening the rest, adds a little to their combined strength.

(20) ROMAN HISTORIANS SPEAK OF CHRIST.—We may fitly conclude this necessarily imperfect survey by recalling the fact that, while such men as Professor Drews† insinuate that there

* See the writer's article "The Real Date of the Gospels," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October, 1908.

† Several destructive critics have made bold attempts to invalidate the evidence of even the existence of the Christ of the New Testament. The most prominent at the present time is Professor Arthur Drews, of the Karlsruhe Technical High School. He succeeded in drawing attention to himself, and creating a sensation in German theological circles, by his book, *Christusmythe*, 1909, and a notable discussion in Berlin.

Others had preceded him, or are still presenting similar views, such as

was no such person as Christ, Roman historians who had no leaning toward Christianity wrote of him.

Tacitus,* a contemporary of the Apostle John, though he speaks of the Christians in a tone of patrician scorn, yet mentions clearly that they were the followers of Christ, that Christ was crucified by Pontius Pilate, the procurator of Judea, and gives a harrowing account of the persecutions inflicted upon them by Nero. Tacitus evidently had no more doubt about the existence of Christ than he had of that of Julius Cæsar or of his own contemporary, Nero, whose dreadful deeds he records.

The intimate friend of Tacitus, Pliny the younger,† tells more about the Christians, and speaks of Christ as worshipped by them; while his intimate friend, the historian Suetonius,‡ mentions Christians as suffering persecution.

These three Romans were younger contemporaries of "that disciple whom Jesus loved"; and show no more doubt about the existence of Christ than did the Apostle himself.

So, as the veil is lifted by research and discovery, it plainly appears that, instead of revealing weaknesses in the foundations of the Christian faith, the progress is from strength to strength. With each new discovery the wonderful story is seen more clearly to be based on facts and not on fancies.

Kalthoff, of Bremen; Robertson with his *Christianity and Mythology* (London, 1900); Jensen, of the Gilgamesh-Epos theory; Niemojewski with his Astral theory; Bolland, of Leyden, with his Joshua Redivivus theory, and others. On the whole subject see especially the excellent refutation of this impious and foolish contention, by Shirley J. Case, of the Department of New Testament Literature, Chicago University, *The Historicity of Jesus*.

* Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 44. "To put an end to this rumour (*i.e.*, that Nero had caused the burning of Rome) he shifted the charge upon others, and inflicted the most cruel tortures upon a body of men detested for their abominations, and popularly known by the name of Christians. The name came from one Christus, who was put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the Procurator, Pontius Pilate; but, though checked for the time, the detestable superstition broke out again, not in Judea only, where the mischief began, but even in Rome, where every horrible and shameful iniquity, from every quarter of the world, pours in and finds a welcome." . . . "Their death was turned into a diversion. They were clothed in the skins of wild beasts and torn by dogs; they were fastened to crosses, or set up to be burned, so as to serve the purpose of lamps when daylight failed. Nero gave up his own gardens for this spectacle, etc."

† Pliny's *Letter to Trajan*, X, 97.

‡ Suetonius, *Life of Nero*, 16.

Thus, more and more, research has revealed the verity of the things "believed among us," by showing the absolute truthfulness of the many allusions, incidentally made, to laws, customs, officers of government, phases of governmental administration of great variety and unusual complexity, to a vast variety of characters of individuals acting under varied conditions, and with various ends in view, characteristics of various races in different countries, and other particulars.

In excavations made some years ago on the Acropolis of Athens there was found, built into a long-buried wall, a fragment of stone which proved to have on one of its sides in bas-relief a female head, with the fingers of a hand, from which they had evidently been broken, holding a twist of hair on the back of the head. M. Kavadias, the archæologist in charge, pronounced it a fragment of the frieze of Phidias on the Parthenon near by. Other archæologists expressed doubt. After a good deal of discussion, it was recollected that among parts of the Parthenon frieze among the Elgin marbles in the British Museum there was a figure of Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, lacking the head. A cast was taken of the head discovered on the Acropolis, and sent to England. This was placed on the part of the frieze from which a head had been broken away. It fitted in the cavity, the figure was symmetrical, and a lifted arm and hand on the frieze just met the fingers on the back of the head. No argument was needed. The demonstration was perfect that it was the head of Iris.

The priceless jewel, the New Testament, has been shown by history and archæology to fit its setting as perfectly as the head of Iris its place on the frieze.

We have seen that archæology and history combine to show us, through documents brought to light, the text of the New Testament fully certified, and through discoveries of other kinds, together with historical statements, its agreement with the conditions of the period to which it belongs.

But, here, an objector may say, "Well, what does all this amount to? These archæological discoveries, and all these historical references which are so correct, do not, after all, tend to prove the truth of the main claims and doctrines of the Christian religion."

It may be replied that, if not directly, yet indirectly, they do indicate the truth of the claims and doctrines, which are founded on the facts narrated. We all know that indirect evidence is often the most convincing, since to it there does not attach the suspicion of deception which we may

have in the case of the direct testimony of a witness. A foot-print or finger-print may decide a question with more certainty than the testimony of the most voluble witness. The Gospels, especially, do not deal so much with doctrines as with facts; and when we see the evidence of care and truthfulness of the narrators of these facts in their references to the surrounding conditions in which those facts are said to have occurred, we naturally infer that the same care has been used and the same adherence to strict truth has been followed in the narration of the facts themselves.

Then, the writers' intimate knowledge of these conditions, as exhibited by archæology and history, shows us intimate knowledge of the facts narrated as having occurred in the midst of this environment.

In such particulars as can be tested by the light of history and archæology, we find in the narrators the truthfulness, intelligence, and correct information of the best witnesses. It can hardly be demanded that we should consider them untruthful, unintelligent, and ill-informed as to those particulars to which this test cannot be applied. If we find them the best of witnesses in those cases where we have tests of their correctness, shall we not naturally conclude that they are reliable witnesses in cases where we have no such tests to apply? Finding them thoroughly reliable in the one case, shall we doubt their reliability in the other?

When we find these great facts related by men who, by incidental references, and the vividness of their descriptions, indicate that they were eye-witnesses of them,* and then find their accounts true to the facts of the whole surrounding situation as seen in the light which history and archæology have shed upon them, we cannot think of them as either deceivers or deceived in regard to the things declared by them to have taken place in the midst of these surroundings, especially when no possible motive for deception can be suggested, and when, further, we see them declaring them true when confronted with loss, danger, and death for doing so.

* In the case of Luke, we have a most accurate observer and historian, who tells the "most excellent" Theophilus that "it seemed good unto me, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order." He tells us of his sources—"As many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative . . . who, from the beginning, were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." He was, himself, doubtless among these witnesses and the scenes of the wonderful story during Paul's two years' imprisonment in Cæsarea.

We think of the Incarnation, the Miracles, the Divine Teaching, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, as central truths of Christianity; but the central truth of all these is that JESUS IS "THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD." He could say "I am the truth," and "I am the Light of the World." The rays of all the great truths of Redemption shine out from the Sun of Righteousness. He is the centre of all. Our faith is not built on abstract doctrines but on Him who is the Truth. Without Him they would be non-existent. It is "the Christ, the Son of the Living God," who became flesh, who Divinely and humanly lived "among us," taught and worked with Divine wisdom and power, was crucified and offered Himself a ransom for us—a ransom of infinite price, because Divine, and for us, because human—rose again, because possessed of Divine power over death, and ascended on high to reign over and rule principalities and powers as only God can, and as "Head over all things for the Church, which is His body," as only God the Son of man can.*

When we have before us the testimony of those who were with Him, who "beheld His glory," who were "eye-witnesses of His Majesty," and who offered their lives as pledges of the truth of the facts which they related about Him, shall we disbelieve them?

We will not, we cannot. We will worship and bow down, and with Thomas cry "MY LORD AND MY GOD."

EX FLORE FRUCTUS.

Before the paper was read Dr. Thirtle said:

By way of preliminary, some words may be spoken in explanation, for it is quite likely that Members and Associates who have joined the Institute in recent years may be asking "What is the Gunning Prize Competition?"

The scheme owes its origin to His Excellency Robert Halliday Gunning, M.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E., who died in 1898. Dr. Gunning became a Life Member of the Institute in 1871, but his financial support of the work did not stop with one payment. In fact, during a period of upwards of a quarter of a century, he was a warm and generous benefactor; and one of his benefactions took the form of

* Hebrews iv, 15.

a capital sum of £500, the interest of which was to be applied from time to time in furtherance of special work in connection with the Institute. The interest is now allowed to accumulate with a view to a triennial prize, according to the will of the benefactor. On the death of Dr. Gunning, in 1898, the bond for £500 was paid over to the trustees of the Institute, and the scheme drawn up under which three prizes (each of £40) have now been awarded. The first of these was awarded to the Rev. John Urquhart, now of Melbourne, for an essay on "The Bearing of Recent Oriental Discoveries on Old Testament History"; the second was awarded to Professor H. Langhorne Orchard, M.A., B.Sc., for an essay on "The Attitude of Science towards Miracles"; and the third to the Author of the paper now to be read by the Secretary.

A cordial vote of thanks was unanimously passed to the Author of the Paper, and the discussion thereon postponed until the next Meeting.
