

# THE PRESBYTERIAN QUARTERLY.

---

NO. 43.—JANUARY, 1898

---

## I. THE ISRAEL TABLET OF MERNEPTAH.

EVER since the Rosetta Stone unlocked the Egyptian hieroglyphs scholars have eagerly searched these ancient records for some mention of the Israelites, who, according to their own Scriptures, sojourned in the land of the Pharaohs for four hundred and thirty years, being cruelly oppressed during a portion of this period, and forced to build for the government the great store cities of Rameses and Pithom, and who then marched out of the country under the human leadership of Moses and with the miraculous assistance of the Almighty. But, although Pithom itself has been unearthed and identified beyond question by its own inscriptions found on the spot, and although the monuments and papyri have given us abundant proofs of the correctness of the biblical references to Egyptian manners and customs, once impeached by a rash criticism, and although the political conditions of the country in the several stages of its history were closely connected with the fortunes of Israel for several centuries and with the outworking of its predicted destiny (Gen. xv. 13-16), yet until last year there has never been found a single clear reference in the Egyptian records to the children of Israel. Neither the brick-makers, who are represented on the well-known wall-painting of a Theban tomb, and who were once supposed to be the enslaved Hebrews, nor the Habiri of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, who are described as having stormed various cities of Southern Palestine in the time of Khuenaten (fifteenth century, B. C.), and whom Haynes and Conder still take to be the invading He-

## II. THE DIATESSARON OF TATIAN, AND ITS EVIDENTIAL VALUE.<sup>1</sup>

THE fact that a popular monthly magazine has lately contained an article on the question, "When Were the Gospels Written?"<sup>2</sup> is significant. Such themes are not generally discussed in these purveyors of pleasant pabulum for the palates of the lovers of light reading; and the publication of a discussion of this sort through this sort of a medium is a very sure indication that such questions are now "in the air," and that the general public are feeling a keen interest in them. The time has been when the words "genuineness and authenticity" have made theological classes yawn, and many a one, apparently, would have been perfectly willing to leave the discussion of the subject in which these terms were employed to the dry-as-dust professors of Evidences, while he gave his energies to the investigation of living themes and the acquisition of practical knowledge. Now, all this is changed, and questions like this are the questions of the hour. Why is it that while, in a past generation, Horne's *Introduction*, with its facsimiles of old manuscripts and its endless discussions about them, was the *bête noir* of the theological student, in our day, facsimiles of Syriac Gospels and so-called 'Logia' are found on the pages of our most popular daily newspapers and magazines, while discussions about them are eagerly read, not only by theologians, but by that great mass of the public, to the individuals composing which we give the

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Diatessaron of Tatian," by Rev. Hope W. Hogg, B. D., in the recently published volume (ix.) of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*; Allan Menzies, D. D., editor. Original supplement to the American edition. Christian Literature Company, New York. 1896. "The 'Diatessaron' of Tatian," Walter R. Cassels, *Nineteenth Century*, April, 1895. "The Diatessaron: A Reply," J. Rendel Harris, *Contemporary Review*, August, 1895. Articles on Tatian, by M. Maher, in *The Month*, London, November and December, 1892. A resumé of these two articles of Maher first called the writer's attention to this subject, and he is indebted to them for many interesting facts.

<sup>2</sup> By F. G. Kenyon, M. A., assistant keeper of the manuscripts in the British Museum, in *McClure's Magazine*, September, 1897.

name of "the general reader"? The answer to the question is that, as the president of Princeton University has impressively said, "The question of the day is, What is the Bible?" But a further question is, How did it come about that this is the question of the day? The answer to this is, that the hosts of unbelief have made a combined attack on the Bible, such as scarcely any other age has ever witnessed. The unprecedented development of human knowledge in our nineteenth century, especially as regards the physical facts and potencies of the world we live in, the great achievements of discovery and invention, and the overturning of so many old theories and beliefs about these things, seem to have set in motion a skeptical, revolutionary process of overturning and investigation in all other departments of knowledge. The result, in the case of a vast multitude of the writers and readers of our day, is something like an "eclipse of faith," and many have been in the habit of speaking of the simple and happy faith of the days of our fathers and grandfathers as a thing utterly unattainable by the well-informed of our times. However dark, cold, and cheerless may be the way of the skeptic, and however painful the chill about the heart of the orphaned unbeliever, their lot seems to be regarded as one of the inevitable results of that disillusionment which comes from the letting in of modern light.

The combined influence of Darwinism<sup>1</sup> and Higher Criticism is undoubtedly responsible for this questioning of the truth and divine origin of the Scriptures; but while these two great movements have promoted the growth of skepticism about the Bible in general as a revelation from God, four men, two of them Germans, another a Frenchman, and the fourth an Englishman—or, at least, an English writer who wrote anonymously, have made an attack upon the central shrine of divine truth, the Gospels which give us those facts about Christ which form the basis of the Christian's hope. Strauss, Baur, Renan, and the unknown author of *Supernatural Religion*, all striving to eliminate the supernatural from the Christian religion, have, perhaps, done most to bring about this state of mind in a part of the reading public and among the writers of our time.

---

<sup>1</sup>The writer uses the term "Darwinism" as a popular name for atheistic evolution.

Of these four, Ferdinand Christian Baur, the founder of the Tübingen school, is *facile princeps*. According to his theory, the synoptic Gospels were not written till the period extending from 130 to 150 A. D.; and he held that the Gospel of John was not written earlier than the decade ending with 170 A. D.

This, if proved, would show that all the Gospels are spurious productions, as their reputed authors, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, were all dead long before these dates.

Baur's position, like that of Strauss, who was his pupil, and then his instructor through his *Leben Jesu*, is one of the many illustrations of the fact that the greatest minds, when infatuated with theories which they themselves have originated, become oblivious of patent facts and incapable of reasoning. In the words of an able writer:<sup>1</sup> "The only reason why Strauss and Baur stopped at the last half of the second century was simply that no degree of audacity could ascribe them (*i. e.*, the Gospels) to a later period. The volumes of Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian" (he might have added those of Hippolytus), "written before or immediately after 200, proclaim from the shelves of every theological library that the Gospels were as universally accepted and venerated by the entire church in A. D. 190 as in A. D. 1890."

To these have now been added a notable work of a still earlier writer, *The Diatessaron of Tatian*, by the discovery of which the theory of Baur has been utterly exploded.

#### I. THE DISCOVERY OF THE DIATESSARON.

The anonymous book just referred to, which was published in England in 1875 under the title *Supernatural Religion*, had great influence with a large section of the educated men of the country. It is said to have been so popular that it passed through a half-dozen editions in as many months. The most prominent feature of the book was its denial of the existence of any supernatural quality in the Christian religion, and, of course, in the Scripture on which it is founded. The book, with much show of learning, aimed especially to disprove the genuineness and authenticity of

---

<sup>1</sup> M. Maher in *The Month*, London, November, 1892.



the four Gospels. Its great popularity was, doubtless, due to the fact that it seemed to prove just what quite a large proportion of the most cultivated class of Englishmen wished to see proved, and was an able utterance of the unspoken thought and wish of many who had become skeptical as to the divine origin and character of Christianity under the influence of the scientific theories of Darwin and his followers, and the critical theories of the Tübingen school. It was published at the time when atheistic evolution was rife and destructive criticism was boldest. Men who had already become skeptical rejoiced in the rise of a sturdy champion who, they thought, furnished them with ample proof of the spuriousness of the fundamental records of Christianity, and freed them from the shackles of that religion which stood in the way of their mad rush toward atheism.

The author took the extreme position of Baur, and denied the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels. Among other sarcastic expressions was this: "No one seems to have seen *Tatian's Harmony*, probably for the reason that there was no such work." Now, much as this anonymous writer thought that he knew, he was unable to read the secrets of the future, and did not dream of what was going to happen the very year after he wrote these words.

Lightfoot wrote a reply in which he proved, from quotations from the *Diatessaron* by Syriac authors in different ages, that such a work certainly did exist; but the impossibility of presenting the book itself left it uncertain as to what was the exact nature of the work, and what was the precise amount of its value in establishing the genuineness of the four Gospels.<sup>1</sup>

All doubt was soon to disappear. Many references of Syriac literature showed that the eminent and saintly Ephraem Syrus (d. 373) not only knew of the existence of Tatian's *Diatessaron* in his day, but, as it was very extensively used among the churches

---

<sup>1</sup> Even such a scholar as Neander seems to have been in doubt on this point. In speaking of the character of another lost book attributed to Tatian, and especially discussing the question whether it was founded on the four Gospels alone or partly on Apocryphal Gospels, he remarks: "We should know more of this matter if the *Εὐαγγέλιον διάτεσσάρων* had been preserved."

of Syria, wrote a commentary on it. Now, it so turned out that in 1876, the very year after the bold assertion of the author of *Supernatural Religion* just referred to was made, Dr. Georgius Moesinger, of the University of Salzburg, published Ephraem's commentary at the request of the Mechitarist Fathers at Venice. Forty years before, the Armenian Mechitarist Fathers had published, in the Armenian language, an edition of the works of Ephraem Syrus, including his commentary on the *Diatessaron*; but the learned world had been oblivious of its existence all this time. Even after Dr. Moesinger gave it in a Latin version (which was a revision of the earlier one of Aucher) in a new edition, separate from the other works of Ephraem, in which it had so long lain concealed, it attracted no attention and was not generally known for several years. Dr. Ezra Abbot, the greatest American critic, had the honor of calling the attention of scholars to its value in his *Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, in 1880. Lightfoot, writing in May, 1877, was in entire ignorance of the ally that had risen up the year before for the establishment of his contention and the refutation of his antagonist.

The author of *Supernatural Religion*, of course, came to know of this publication of Ephraem's commentary on the *Diatessaron*, but he was in for denials now, and, poor man, not knowing what he did, in an edition of his work issued in 1879, ventured to say: "It is obvious that there is no evidence of any value connecting Tatian's Gospel with those of our Canon." He most certainly would not have said this if, by any means, he could have foreseen what was to happen two years later.

Professor Zahn of Erlangen, with the help of Moesinger's Latin version of Ephraem's commentary on Tatian's *Diatessaron* and of the *Homilies* of Aphraates, which were based on the *Diatessaron*, and, perhaps, from other sources, reconstructed the *Diatessaron* as far as he could, and published it in 1881. It was now seen that the *Diatessaron* was composed of our four Gospels.

These were notable collisions of boldly uttered fancies with hard and stubborn facts, which served to demonstrate their falsity, and to proclaim it as if from the very housetops. But the evidence was to be made still clearer and fuller.

By this work of Zahn, attention was drawn to an Arabic MS. in the Vatican library, marked No. XIV., which purported to be a translation of the *Diatessaron* itself. There was brought from the East to Rome by Joseph S. Assemani, about the year 1719, an Arabic manuscript which was described by Stephen E. Assemani, Rosenmuller, and Akerblad, and, a few years ago, again, by Ciasca, a learned orientalist connected with the Vatican library. "It consisted of one hundred and twenty-three folios, of which the first seven were somewhat spoiled, and two were missing." Ciasca was urged to translate and publish this MS., and fully intended doing so; but the pressure of other work caused him to delay it from time to time. This enforced delay, like many another, was overruled for the best result in the end. There was in the library one day, the "Visitor Apostolic" of the Catholic Copts in Egypt, the Most Reverend Antonius Marcos. The "Visitor" was invited to examine the MS. by Ciasca, and immediately told him that he knew of another like it in the possession of a gentleman in Egypt, and that he could have it brought to Rome. The MS. was sent according to promise. It bears upon it the name of the donor in the following inscription at the end: "A present from Halim Dōs Chālī, the Copt, the Catholic, to the Apostolic See, in the year of Christ, 1886."

This codex is described as follows: "The codex consists of three hundred and fifty-three leaves. There is no date attached, but the MS. seems to belong, at the latest, to the fourteenth century. The pages are nine by six and one-quarter inches, inclosed in an illuminated square of golden, red and purple lines, with an ornamentation of golden asterisks."<sup>1</sup>

This MS. was of great service in supplying the two lacunæ in the first, caused by the loss of the two folios just mentioned, and in determining doubtful readings. It is described as being better than the first, in text and other respects, but quite inferior to it in orthography.

It was deposited in the Borgian Library, and, from this fact, has been named the Borgian MS., while the other is called the Vatican, because it has long been, and still is, in the Vatican Library. It

---

<sup>1</sup> Maher, as above.

is entirely clear that these MSS. are not copied the one from the other, nor from any common exemplar, though they have a common Syriac remote ancestor.

In speaking of the great interest excited by the discovery of the "New Syriac Gospels," by Mrs. Lewis, in 1892, Prof. Rendel Harris says, that "one of the first questions that will be asked will be, 'Why have you not done it into English?'" This has, at last, been done in the case of Tatian's great work, and we have *the Diatessaron done into English*. We now have it in the recently published ninth volume of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, translated, according to the statement of the title page, by Rev. Hope W. Hogg, B. D., though he informs us that his wife translated the larger part for him. The statement of the title page is, then, made on the principle, *Qui facit per alium facit per se*, only the *alium* should be *aliam* in this case.

It is in keeping with the great trend of our times that we find the Cambridge ladies, Mrs. Lewis and her sister Mrs. Gibson, going to the St. Catherine Convent at Mount Sinai, and discovering the Syriac Gospels, and then see this Oxford lady working side by side with her husband in giving the *Diatessaron* of Tatian to the English-speaking world. But an interesting question is, what of the form and contents of the *Diatessaron*?

## II. THE DIATESSARON AS WE NOW HAVE IT.

Harmonies are made in two forms, either in parallel columns (where the subject is mentioned by more than one evangelist), or with all the gospels interwoven, so as to give a continuous narrative of events and utterances. The *Diatessaron*, or Harmony of Tatian is of the latter kind.

### (a), *A Continuous Account.*

The narratives of all the evangelists are combined so as to give an account of our Saviour's life and teachings in chronological order, so far as the compiler could determine this order. In this respect it is like the late Dr. William M. Taylor's *Life of Our Lord in the Words of the Four Evangelists*, and other harmonies which might be mentioned. Hence, some old writers speak of it as the "Gospel of the *combined*," as distinguished from the *distinct* Gospels.



*(b), The Genealogies Omitted.*

Tatian omitted the genealogies. Theodoret intimates that this was due to a heretical tendency, and says that he also omitted everything which indicated that our Saviour was descended from David. That the last accusation is due to the prejudice of the heresy hunter is made clear by an inspection of the *Diatessaron*. No such omissions are to be found. On the other hand, in the very first section, Christ is spoken of as the son of David. "The Lord God shall give him the throne of his father David"<sup>1</sup> is the expression which, above all others, would have been omitted in such a case, but it is found here, coupled with the announcement that "this shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High." He did omit the genealogies, but so does Dr. Taylor, who surely will never be accused of Docetism. The omission was evidently due to the fact that it would be difficult to fit them into a continuous narrative.<sup>2</sup>

*(c), The Diatessaron is Divided into Fifty-five Sections.*

It is only in comparatively recent times that our Bibles have been divided into chapters and verses for convenience of reference, and it is altogether probable that this division of the *Diatessaron* into sections was made for the convenience of those who read it in public services in Syria for several centuries. The division could not have been made by a man of Tatian's sense. It looks like the work of an idiot in many places, as there is no regard whatever for the subject, the division often coming in the middle of a narrative. Rendel Harris suggests that this division into fifty-five sections was made in order that the whole might be read in churches during the year on the Sabbaths and principal feasts. This seems altogether probable; but it is time to look at—

*(d), Some Peculiar Readings of the Diatessaron.*

We should remember that it was almost inevitable that there should be many expressions which would sound rather strange to

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 32.

<sup>2</sup> The two Arabic MSS., the Vatican and the Borgian, have the genealogies, the first side by side in the narrative, and the latter appended at the close. They have evidently been added by another hand after Tatian's day.

ears accustomed to the rhythm of the familiar words of King James' Version, which we have heard from our childhood. Even the Revised Version sometimes surprises us with an unfamiliar expression, though that is professedly not a new translation, but a revision of that of King James. The *Diatessaron* was, as far as we can trace it, a Syriac version. On the other hand, we have had the Greek text, the nearest to the original that could be determined by all the critical means available, and from it our English version was made, and the Revised Version was based chiefly on the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, the greater correctness of which was secured through many sources unknown when King James' Version was translated.

It is necessary to remember that the *Diatessaron* was almost certainly composed in Syriac. In spite of its Greek name and other reasons which Harnack urged for thinking that it was originally composed in Greek, Syriac scholars who have examined the question with great care pronounce it as certain that it was a Syriac book. At any rate, we know that from the early dawn of Syrian Christianity it was used in the churches in Syria. Therefore, when we read the *Diatessaron* in the English version just published, we are reading the translation of a text that branched off from the Greek very early, and that has passed through many vicissitudes, and may have suffered changes by the mistakes of copyists, by mistranslations in passing from version to version, and that has been influenced, as we have clear evidence, by contact with different versions which are well known. The accretions, and other changes from such sources, are noted by the learned editor of the *Diatessaron* in abundant foot-notes. This being so, we need not expect the version before us to tally exactly with either our Authorized or Revised Version. In spite of all this, it is seldom that the meaning is affected to any marked degree. Some of the most singular turns of expression will be given, though, of course, the space allowed will not admit of any full display of these peculiarities. Here are some examples:

Old Simeon was preserved till he had "seen with his eyes the Messiah of the Lord." And in this form we have his "*Nunc*

*Dimittis*," "Now loosest thou the bonds of thy servant." We are rather surprised at the expression in the account of the offering of the Magi (which seems natural enough, however, when we remember that the camel was then, as it still is, the ship of the desert), "They opened their saddle-bags and offered to him offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matt. ii. 11.) In the account of the visit to Jerusalem during our Saviour's childhood, we are told that Joseph and his mother "supposed that he was with the children of their company." (Luke ii. 44.)

The version of John i. 18, giving a glimpse of the inscrutable relations of the Father and Son, is, "the only Son, God, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath told of him." In that scene in which John pointed out Christ to his own disciples, as John saw Jesus coming unto him, we hear him saying: "This is the Lamb of God that taketh on itself the burden of the sins of the world." (John i. 29.) When his family could not understand the change that came over him when he began his public ministry and spoke his wonderful words and did his wonderful deeds, we are told, "And his relatives heard, and went out to take him, and said, He hath gone out of his mind." We find the *Diatessaron* following the Greek more closely and translating it more literally than our own English versions in the account of the thronging of the multitude about him when he was healing many, "so that they were, *almost falling upon* (*ἐπιπίπτειν*) *him*, on account of their seeking to get near him." (Mark iii. 10.) The two sparrows are spoken of as "sold for a farthing *in a bond*." The meaningless phrase "in a bond" seems to have crept into the text by the similarity of the Syriac word for "farthing" and that for "in a bond." Indeed, a footnote tells us that the two phrases are but different explanations of the same Syriac consonants. In the account of the giving of sight to the blind man, Bartimeus, we have one of the many indications of the line of descent—the family genealogy, so to speak—of the *Diatessaron* text. When our Saviour asks the blind man what he wishes him to do for him, the *Diatessaron* represents him as replying, "My Lord and Master, that my eyes may be opened, *so that I may see thee*." This remarkable addition to our Greek text is found, like many of the peculiar read-

ings of the *Diatessaron*, in the Curetonian Syriac manuscript. Several of these, too, are found in the "New Syriac Gospels," as Rendel Harris calls them, discovered by Mrs. Lewis at Mt. Sinai in 1892. These peculiar expressions indicate a relationship between the *Diatessaron* and the Curetonian and Lewis texts. But more of this anon. Passing on to the betrayal of our blessed Lord, we find the expression in reference to the thirty pieces of silver, "the thirty pieces of money, the price of the precious one." The seamless robe is thus referred to: "And his tunic was without sewing, from the top woven throughout." Our Saviour's cry from the cross to his Father is given in a strange form: "Yāil, Yāīli, why hast thou forsaken me?" In a footnote the translator says, "The syllable 'Ya' is, doubtless, the Arabic interjection 'O!' so that it is 'O God! O my God!' etc." The centurion who, at the crucifixion, commanded the guard, is called "the officer of the foot-soldiers," and this the editor considers a mistake of the translator into Arabic. It is, perhaps, unnecessary to give more instances of peculiar readings. These, as has been intimated, are such as we might very naturally expect to find in a text which was translated from the Greek at a very early day, and had been retranslated into Arabic, and, of course, recopied a number of times.

We are familiar with the sight of a large ball of snow rolled on the ground in various directions, with one object after another adhering to it, having been picked up in its course, while, perhaps, a bit of color on its surface here and there shows the kind of soil on which it has been rolled. It is liable to be somewhat thus with a text that has been translated and copied over and over again. Some accretions will stick to it, and it will take the color of the life and habits and modes of speech of the people among whom it is translated or copied, and the peculiarities of versions with which it has come in contact. A remarkable thing about the *Diatessaron* is, that its text is so pure that no doctrine or fact of the New Testament is at all distorted in it;<sup>1</sup> and the characteristic to which attention should be drawn is, that *Tatian*

---

<sup>1</sup> Yet, when read at family prayers, its peculiar expressions enchain the attention of young and old, throwing, as they sometimes do, new light on the narrative.



*gave only the words of the four evangelists.* No word of explanation connects the phrases that are carefully woven together to set forth the wonderful life and words of Christ. No attempted reconciliation of apparent discrepancies is given; and there is nothing answering to the headings of chapters in our English Bible, even. In the words of the last writer who mentions the *Diatessaron* as a work which he knew, before its disappearance, Abd Ischō (or Ebed Jesu), who died early in the fourteenth century, "With all diligence he attended to the utmost degree to the right order of those things which were done and said by the Saviour; of his own he did not add a single saying."<sup>1</sup>

While the *Diatessaron* gathered some accretions, on the other hand we find that it escaped some corruptions that are found in our Greek received text. One such case, at least, and that a notable one, may be seen in the omission of the account of the woman taken in adultery, which, by the almost unanimous consent of critics, is now considered spurious. It crept into the text very early. But it evidently was not considered a part of the Holy Scripture (though it may have been known as a verbal tradition) in the time of Origen. In his commentary on John, just published, in the same volume with the *Diatessaron*, that account (John vii. 53—viii. 11) is omitted. The fact that Tatian omits it indicates that he wrote before it had gotten into the text. The *Diatessaron*, does, however, include the gloss (as it almost certainly is), about the angel descending and troubling the water in the pool of Bethesda (John v. 3, 4), and this is an indication of the very early introduction into the text of these words, which were probably written as an explanation by some transcriber who lived early enough to know of this as the traditional belief of the Jews about this pool.

---

<sup>1</sup> It seems impossible to account for Harnack's charge of freedom in the handling of the Gospels by Tatian in making his harmony, unless he considers the very act of making a harmony one of freedom. No harmonist from Tatian's day to our own, it may safely be said, ever handled the Gospels with more reverence. He seemed to refrain, indeed, from putting in one word of his own, even as a connective, or for purposes of reconciliation of accounts or of explanation of obscurities. One does not like to think that the exigencies of Harnack's critical creed may have influenced his judgment.

No description of the Arabic version of the *Diatessaron* would be at all complete without mention at least of *the notes prefixed to the Vatican and Borgian MSS.*, and the *subscriptions appended* at the close of each. We need not dwell on them at any length, yet it is curious to note that in the subscription of the Borgian, the name of Tatian is written Tatianus, while in the introductory note it is written Titianus. Another matter of interest is that both notes of the Borgian manuscript give the name of the translator, and both assert that it was translated from the Syriac. This information is given in the following quaintly reverential and prayerful terms in the subscription :

“It was translated by the excellent and learned priest, Abu'l Fārāj 'Abdulla ibn-at-Tayyib (may God grant him favor) ; from Syriac into Arabic, from an exemplar written by 'Isa ibn-'Ali al-Motatabib, pupil of Honain ibn-Ishak (God have mercy on them both). Amen.”

This Honain, the English editor and translator speaks of, in his learned introduction, as “a famous Arabic physician and medical writer of Bagdad (died 873), whose school produced quite a number of translations and translators.” The “excellent priest” Ibn-at-Tayyib, the Arabic translator, who died 170 years later, was “a well-known man, Nestorian monk and scholar, secretary to Elias I., Patriarch of Nisibis.”

But the most interesting and important thing about the *Diatessaron* is that *it is composed of the four canonical Gospels, and of these alone*, thus showing that these Gospels were in existence, and had been gathered together and translated into Syriac, and that they must have been for a long time fully recognized as the authoritative records of the life of Christ. That none of those later forgeries, the apocryphal Gospels, were used, is indicated not only by an inspection of Tatian's work, but by the very name which he gave it, the *Diatessaron* (through four), showing that at the time when Tatian composed the *Diatessaron* (probably soon after 150 A. D.), our four Gospels, *and these alone*, were recognized as the authentic and authoritative records of our Saviour's life. This will be more fully discussed under another head, but it is not superfluous to remark here, that *the Diatessaron of Tatian is, in*

*itself, a positive proof of the spuriousness of all the apocryphal Gospels.*

It is proposed to present, in another article, a biographical sketch of Tatian, the first harmonist, to trace the footprints of the *Diatessaron* in literature through the ages since it was composed, and then to show its evidential value in establishing the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels.

P. P. FLOURNOY.

*Bethesda, Md.*

# THE Presbyterian Quarterly.

NO. 44.—APRIL, 1898.

## I. THE NEW PNEUMATOLOGY.

The genetic principle of the New Theology, the dynamic force with which it reconstructs the Old and organizes the New, is the *Immanence of God*.

Immanence and Transcendence are philosophical antitheses. Immanence (*immaneo*) literally means to remain in, indwelling, inhabiting, while Transcendence (*transcendeo*) literally means to go beyond, surpass, stand above, be superior to. An immanent soul is an embodied soul, an incarnated spirit, such as are all living men; a transcendent soul is one which has gone beyond the material organism, a disembodied soul. An immanent God is a world-embodied God, an intramundane God; a transcendent God is one which stands above the world and is superior to it and in no sense a part of it, an extramundane God. The life of an immanent God is an outflow; the life of a transcendent God is an inflow. An immanent God evolves; a transcendent God creates. An immanent God is natural; a transcendent God is supernatural. An immanent God operates *ad intra*; a transcendent God acts *ad extra*. An immanent God is related to the world as the Three Persons in the Godhead are related to each other; a transcendent God is related to the world in an extramundane and supersensible manner. Paternity, filiation, spiration, within the circle of the Godhead, are immanent and intrasitive acts; creation, providence, miracles, redemption are transcendent



### III. THE DIATESSARON OF TATIAN, AND ITS EVIDENTIAL VALUE.

Professor Fritz Hommel, in the preface of his lately published book, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition as Illustrated by the Monuments*, says :

“I look to the time when every enlightened reader of the Bible will be something of an archæologist.”

The article of Professor Sayce in the *Sunday School Times* for January 22nd, 1898, announcing the discovery of the tomb and remains of Menes, the first of the Egyptian kings, and a letter published in the same paper, announcing the discovery of a large number of inscribed clay tablets in the ruins of a city identified as Calneh, mentioned in connection with Nimrod (Gen. 10:10), are among the multiplying signs that we will not have to look far into the future to see this expectation of Prof. Hommel realized to a very great extent. No longer is the interest in archæology limited to a small circle of the learned, but facts about the oldest times come as the newest news through every avenue of public intelligence, from the “*Transactions*” of archæological societies, to the daily newspaper.

One result has been the demonstration before the eyes of the people of the absurdity of much that has been said by the Higher Critics. As has been well said, “The new discoveries have made the old infidelity impossible.”

No one at all acquainted with the facts of the case can imagine that an apology is needed for drawing attention, in a second article, to the evidential value of the Diatessaron of Tatian. As if in order to refute the assertions of modern skepticism, God has caused a great array of witnesses to rise from the dust to give an answer which cannot be gainsaid, and not one among all these witnesses speaks in louder or clearer accents than the Diatessaron. Yet even this witness

has not been allowed to go unchallenged. The result, however, has been only to emphasize the testimony and show more clearly the reliableness of the witness.

There seems to be good reason to suppose that the antagonist who has attacked the Diatessaron very viciously in the *Nineteenth Century*<sup>1</sup> is no other than its old enemy, the unknown author of *Supernatural Religion*. He seems to bear it an old grudge.

From a mere glance at the references to the Diatessaron, especially in Syriac literature, through many centuries, we may see that the writing of this article by Mr. Walter R. Cassels, attacking its genuineness, was an act of eminent un-wisdom. Finding the battlements erected by the author of "Supernatural Religion" as a coign of vantage from which skeptics might attack Christianity, shattered by the discovery of the Diatessaron and falling about their ears, this chief among them rushes out to exclaim that nothing serious has happened to the cause of destructive criticism. In this article, published in the *Nineteenth Century*, he boldly repeats some of the assertions of "Supernatural Religion." To use Prof. Harris's words in his *Reply*, "whole sentences are taken, with hardly a change or a transposition, out of the chapter on Tatian, in *Supernatural Religion* or in the corresponding material in the reply of the author of *Supernatural Religion* to Dr. Lightfoot, so that we might begin by discovering whether we were confronting one writer or two."<sup>2</sup>

It would be impossible within the limits of a paper like this to give even a resumé of Prof. Harris's "Reply," but it will not be amiss to give his concluding sentences, in which the results are summed up.

After taking up the assertions of Mr. Cassels one by one, and, from his own vastly superior knowledge of the whole subject, showing their falsity, Dr. Harris goes on to say :

---

<sup>1</sup>"The Diatessaron of Tatian." Walter R. Cassels. *Nineteenth Century*, April, 1895.

<sup>2</sup>The Diatessaron : A Reply. *Contemporary Review*, August, 1895.

“But all these errors are slight and unimportant in comparison with the wrong he has done to himself and his reputation by expressing himself so strongly on a subject with which he was ill acquainted, and by sedulously cultivating the art of making the worse appear the better reason.

“Nothing, therefore, that has been said by Mr. Cassels can in the least invalidate the now generally accepted statement that, shortly after the middle of the second century, a harmony of the four canonical Gospels was constructed by Tatian, the Assyrian; and that our investigation has shown that the influence of this Harmony is widely diffused in Syriac literature.”

It is very true that puns do not usually add to either the dignity or the conclusiveness of an argument, but there is an irresistible impulse to say, that one can think of the result of the discussion as nothing less than the utter demolition of Cassels.

A passing view of the notices of the Diatessaron in many centuries of the past will show the truth of Prof. Harris's conclusion; but, before taking this brief survey, let us inquire about its author.

### III. TATIAN, THE FIRST HARMONIST.

He is the first harmonist of whom anything is known, and it is not at all probable that there *was* one before him. His great zeal for Christianity, as well as his originality and genius, point to him as the probable inventor of this mode of presenting the life of our blessed Lord on earth.

In the introductory note to the Borgian manuscript of the Diatessaron he is called “Titianus, the Greek.” This is evidently the mistake of a copyist, for he himself tells us in so many words that he was an Assyrian. It is true that he wrote in Greek as well as in Syriac, of which his *Address to the Greeks* (Λόγος πρὸς Ἑλληνας) is witness. He was a student of philosophy in general, but inclined to that of Plato as his own philosophical creed. He was born and reared a heathen, and, in the prosecution of his studies, traveled over many countries that he might study the systems of various nations. When he became acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures he was impressed with the fact that these “barbaric

books," as he at first considered them (as a Greek philosopher of that day very naturally would), were "too old to be compared with the learning of the Greeks, too divine to be put on a level with their erroneous doctrine." It should be remembered that Moses preceded Herodotus, "the father of history," by more than a millennium, and it is not strange that he should have been impressed with the venerable antiquity of the books which "Moses wrote." Fortunately for him the Higher Critics were not to be born for nearly two millenniums after his time.

The account of his conversion to Christianity is thus given by Neander, who makes a summary of what Tatian himself tells in his *Address to the Greeks* :

"He was brought up in heathenism, and frequent travels gave him the opportunity of learning the multifarious sorts of heathen worship which at that time were existing together in the Roman empire. None among them all could recommend itself to him as reasonable. Not only did he observe how religion was used in them to the service of sin, but even the highly wrought allegorical interpretations of the ancient myths as symbols of a speculative system of natural philosophy could not satisfy him ; and it appeared to him a dishonorable proceeding for a man to attach himself to the popular religion who did not partake in the common religious belief, and who saw nothing in its doctrine about the gods but symbols of the elements and powers of nature. The mysteries into which he suffered himself to be initiated appeared to him also, in the same manner, not to correspond to the expectations which they awakened ; and the contradictory systems of philosophy offered him no sure grounds of religious faith. He was rendered mistrustful of them by the contradiction which he often observed in those who gave themselves out as philosophers, between the seriousness which they exhibited, for the sake of appearances, in their dress, mien, and language, and the levity of their conduct. While he was in this condition he came to the Old Testament, to which his attention was drawn by what he had heard of the high antiquity of these writings in comparison with the Hellenic religions, as might easily be the case with a Syrian. He himself says of the impression which the reading of this book made upon him :

"These writings found acceptance with me because of the simplicity of their language, the unstudiedness of the writers, the intelligible history of the creation, because of the prediction of the future, because of the wholesomeness of their precepts, and because of the doctrine of the ONE GOD which prevails throughout them."

"The impression which the study of the Old Testament made on him



would appear, from this, to have been with him the preparation for a belief in the gospel.

"Coming, in this state of mind, to Rome, he was converted to Christianity by Justin, of whom he speaks with great reverence."—*Neander's Church History*, p. 418, *Rose's translation*.

Tatian, like his spiritual father, Justin Martyr, retained his philosopher's cloak after he became a Christian, maintaining the position that he did not cease to be a philosopher in embracing Christianity, but rather advanced to that which is the highest and only true philosophy.

So firmly, however, were some of the *principles* of Platonism rooted in his mind that he seems to have been much influenced by them in his views and teachings during the latter part of his life. While Justin lived, however, we have the best testimony that he was free from the fault of teaching that dualism which is laid to his charge in his latter days.

Some time, we know not how long, after the martyrdom of Justin, he became a leader among the Encratites, and, it seems, declaimed against marriage and the drinking of wine as sinful. He also taught that Adam was not saved, deducing this opinion from the assertion of the Scriptures that "In Adam, all die."

Irenæus and Hippolytus speak of Tatian as, at last, a Gnostic, and Valentinian teachings are attributed to him.

These accusations quite probably contain an element of exaggeration as the result of ecclesiastical zeal, as Tatian is said by Irenæus to have "separated from the Church."

Whatever amount of deflection from the truth of Christianity he may have been guilty of, we may be quite sure that it was due to that fruitful source of heresies in all ages—ours being by no means an exception—the adoption of a false philosophy and the endeavor to fit Christianity to the Procrustean bed thus prepared for it. The whole history of Gnosticism is an illustration of this process as followed in the early days of Christianity, and the destructive school of criticism, founded by Baur of Tübingen on the postulates of the Hegelian philosophy, is an object lesson for our times of the

folly of assuming the infallibility of some human theory and then trying to square God's Word to it. The reverse order of procedure must suggest itself to every one who believes in the infallibility of the Scriptures as a Revelation from God to man, as the only true and safe course.

Irenæus tells us (Adv. Hæres, Book I., Ch. xxviii,) that as long as Tatian enjoyed the companionship of Justin Martyr, "he expressed no such views, but after his (Justin's) martyrdom, he separated from the Church," and also that he "composed his own peculiar type of doctrine," and that, among other things, "he declared that marriage was nothing but corruption and fornication."

We may well grieve that one who was so earnest in his advocacy of Christianity, and who held himself always in readiness to lay down his life in testimony of his faith, should, in any degree, have turned from the straight line of orthodoxy, and should, at last, have separated himself from the Church; yet we can never be too grateful for the fact that he composed the *Diatessaron* from the very words of the inspired Gospels of our Lord, "adding not one of his own."

Much as we may regret the false views into which a false philosophy and a mistaken zeal led him, it is an additional reason for gratitude that this very departure from orthodoxy on Tatian's part makes the evidence of the *Diatessaron* for the genuineness of the Gospels more decisive; because this makes it well nigh certain that he composed the harmony in the earlier part of his Christian career. This will be more fully considered when we come to make an estimate of the value of the evidence furnished by this work.

We will now turn to look at some of the

#### IV. FOOT-PRINTS OF THE DIATESSARON DOWN THE AGES.

From them we may see the utter futility of the contention of Cassels.

There are few books that have come down to us through more than seventeen centuries that have left plainer traces

along their paths. There is ample evidence of the existence of the work from a very early date down to the time of the Nestorian bishop Ebed Jesu (or, as our translator writes it, Abd Isho), who died in 1308. For more than five centuries it had been lost, or at least had been unrecognized by the learned, when it was translated into Latin by Ciasca in 1888. We have it now in the two Arabic manuscripts which have been mentioned, as well as the commentary on it written by Ephraem Syrus, who died in 373 A. D. This commentary is in two manuscripts in the Armenian language, which have a common remote ancestor, doubtless, but differ enough to show that neither was copied from the other. These Armenian MSS. contain a commentary following exactly the same order of events as the complete Arabic MSS. of the Diatessaron which we now have. It has been remarked that while these Arabic MSS. show the influence on their text of the Peshito version (or Peshitta, as it is now called), the Armenian MSS. of Ephraem's commentary contain peculiar readings of the Curetonian MS. and of that which Rendel Harris considers the Curetonian's ancestor, the Lewis Sinaitic Palimpsest;<sup>1</sup> and references and quotations "go to show that the Armenian text stands much more closely related to the original than does the Arabic." (Introd. to IX. Vol. Ante-Nicene Fathers, § 15.)

Thus the Armenian MSS. are another independent witness, not only of the existence, from very early times, of the Diatessaron, but of the fact that Ephraem wrote a commentary on it, for they are MSS. of that commentary itself.

The Diatessaron was very extensively used in Syrian churches until the Peshito version (Peshitta) gradually took its place in the fifth century. Even after this it was studied and valued.

Dionysius Bar Salibi, Bishop of Armida (twelfth century), has this to say of it: "Tatian, disciple of Justin, the Philosopher and martyr, selected from the four Gospels and combined

<sup>1</sup>Called by Harris, *The New Syriac Gospels*.

and composed a Gospel, and called it Diatessaron—*i. e.*, 'The Combined, . . . and upon this Gospel Mar Ephraem commented. Its commencement was 'In the beginning was the Word.'"

But this, with the exception of the assertion that the Diatessaron began with the first verse of the Gospel of John, was said, about 350 years earlier, by a Syriac commentator on the New Testament, Isho'dad of Merv (852 A. D.), who distinguishes it from another Diatessaron by Ammonius,<sup>1</sup> who lived nearly a century after Tatian.

As belonging to this (9th) century, the subscription of the Borgian MS. should be noted. As we have seen, that states that it was translated from Syriac into Arabic "from an exemplar written by 'Isa-ibn-'Alial-Motatabbib, pupil of Honain ibn-Ishak," who, we learn, was a famous Arabic physician and teacher of Bagdad (d. 773), whose school produced many translators.

Of Isho 'dad Merv, Prof. Rendel Harris tells us that he transferred to his pages "some of the most astonishing interpretations which are found in Ephraem's commentary, and gives his express statement of his dependence, in these peculiar interpretations, upon the Syrian father." He also tells us that what is true of Isho 'dad is equally true of Bar Salibi and Bar Hebraeus,<sup>2</sup> and taking one passage, Matt. 2:23, as an instance, says :

"Syriac authors steadily quote, and some of them ascribe to Ephraem, a curious scholium on Matt. 2:23" (it is an explanation given by Ephraem of the words, He shall be called a Nazarene), "and this scholium is actually found in the Armenian Commentary."

Victor of Capua, too, had Tatian's Diatessaron, in 545 A. D. A century earlier, we find Theodoret, the zealous bishop of Cyrrhus, very much exercised over the general use of the Dia-

<sup>1</sup>This Harmony of Ammonius of Alexandria (not Ammonius Saccas) was unlike the Diatessaron of Tatian. It was not "combined," or interwoven, but had the four Gospels in four parallel columns—a tetrapla, as Eusebius tells us.

<sup>2</sup>Bar Hebraeus lived 80 or 90 years after Bar Salibi.



tessaron in the churches of his diocese, and, impressed with the fact that Tatian was a heretic, employing very energetic measures to keep his flock from using it. Writing on Heresies, 453, he says, "I myself found more than two hundred copies in reverential use in the churches of our district. All these I collected and removed, replacing them by the Gospels of the four Evangelists."

About a century before this, Ephraem, "the most renowned father of the Eastern Church," wrote his Commentary, a translation of which from Armenian into Latin was made by Moesinger, as we have seen, in 1876, and texts from which, published by Zahn in 1881, led to the examination and translation of the Arabic MS. of the Diatessaron in the Vatican library, and its publication by Ciasca in time for the Pope's jubilee in 1888.

For those who, like the writer, are not Syriac scholars, the region through which the history of this Syriac book leads is largely a *terra incognita*, but when we thus get back to a generally known writer like Theodoret, we feel ourselves to be not only on firmer ground, but in more familiar paths.

Another step brings us to Eusebius, and though he does not seem to have been very familiar with the Diatessaron, as was natural, he being a writer in Greek and that being in Syriac, yet he speaks of it distinctly and indicates clearly his knowledge of its plan and contents. He says :

"Tatian having put together a certain harmony (*συνάφειαν*) and combination (I know not how) of the Gospels, named this the *Dia Tessaron*" (*Διὰ Τεσσάρων*). (H. E. IV. 29.)

Then, when we go back through a century to Hippolytus, we find him speaking of Tatian as an Encratite and Gnostic.

When we go still further back to Irenæus, the teacher of Hippolytus, we find him speaking of Tatian in the same way, and Irenæus was his contemporary for about a half century, and Hippolytus was probably twenty years old when Tatian died.

Now, it is well known that Irenæus was the devoted pupil

of Polycarp, and that Polycarp was the disciple of John, "that disciple whom Jesus loved," being more than thirty years old when John died.<sup>1</sup> Irenæus quotes the Gospel of John extensively, and Tatian places almost the whole of it, about 96 per ct.—a much larger proportion than would have been possible in the case of any of the other Gospels—in the Diatessaron. This settles the much talked of "Johannean problem," which must now retire to the shades of that limbo into which so many of the bloodless phantoms of the Tübingen school have disappeared.

An element of importance in this discussion is the answer to the question :

#### V. WHEN TATIAN COMPOSED THE DIATESSARON.

As to the date of the Diatessaron, common sense obliges us to agree with Harnack when he says, "It *cannot* have been produced during his later years, for all traces of dualism are absent."

The testimony of Irenæus is clear as to the fact that Tatian, his contemporary for about fifty years, did not teach "his peculiar form of doctrine" *till after the martyrdom of Justin*.

We find in the Diatessaron all those narratives and teachings which are most thoroughly out of keeping with the Encratite form of asceticism, given in full. Tatian in his latter days condemned marriage and the use of wine; but in the Diatessaron the account of the marriage in Cana of Galilee and the turning of water into wine is faithfully recorded, as well as Luke 7:33, 34.

Prof. Gildersleeve, in his introduction to his edition of Justin Martyr's Apologies, gives preference to A. D. 163 as the date of Justin's martyrdom.

---

<sup>1</sup>The date of Polycarp's martyrdom has been determined, with a high degree of probability, as February 23rd, A. D. 55, and not in the time of Marcus Aurelius, as has long been thought, and, indeed, as Eusebius tells us. The reasons for preferring the date mentioned cannot be given here, but they are now quite generally accepted as conclusive.

The most probable time, for the composition in so laborious, <sup>1</sup> pains-taking and reverent a way, of this harmony of the four Gospels, must have been *before Tatian had undergone this change*—before the simplicity of his faith had at all received the taint of that Gnosticism which was so rife in his day. The  *motive*  for such a work was probably strongest *when he first came to know the Gospels, and when he felt the ardor of his "first love."* The most probable date, then, is soon after 150 A. D. We can conceive of no  *motive*  for such a work, after his change.

#### VI. THE DIATESSARON AS A WITNESS OF THE GOSPELS.

(a) *It shows that the Apocryphal Gospels, so called, are all spurious.*

The importance of this may not be appreciated by all; but those who have been plied with assertions that there are many other Gospels as old and almost as good as our four,<sup>2</sup> will be glad of the ability to give a ready answer; and the Diatessaron furnishes that answer in a most conclusive form. It contains the Gospels as known to Tatian, and he a man of the widest information, born about ten years after the Apostle John died, *knows of no gospels but those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He evidently lived before any apocryphal gospel was written, or certainly before any such writings gained any credence in the Christian Church.* The very name, Diatessaron (Διὰ Τεσσάρων)—through four—implies that the life of our Lord was given through four Gospels, and four only.

(b) *It absolutely overthrows the Tübingen theory as to the late origin of our four Gospels.*

As we have seen, Baur dates the first three Gospels from 130 to 150, and John during the decade ending A. D. 170. Since the discovery of the Diatessaron, honest followers of

<sup>1</sup>Glancing down a page of the Diatessaron, we see all four of the Gospels quoted in five (5) lines, so carefully are they interwoven. In at least one place, all the four Gospels are drawn on to make up four lines.

<sup>2</sup>This is one of the commonest of all cavils, though, as we see, entirely baseless.

the Tübingen school have acknowledged that Baur's position was utterly untenable. Renan acknowledges that the four Gospels are not spurious. Adolph Harnack, too, admits "that we learn from the Diatessaron that about 160 A. D., our four Gospels had already taken a place of prominence in the Church, and *that no others had done so*, that in particular, the fourth Gospel had taken a place alongside the synoptics." And, also, "that 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." (Harnack as quoted in article on Tatian in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.) But the Diatessaron proves much more than this. If we find a harmony of the four Gospels prepared as early as 160, at the latest, we may conclude that these Gospels had been accepted as the authoritative records of our Saviour's life, long before this time. A harmony of the Gospels would not naturally come into existence immediately on the writing of the Gospels. In the words of Prof. Maher (*The Month*, London, November, 1892), "If Tatian, knowing the whole Church as he did, devoted himself to the construction of an elaborate harmonized Gospel narrative, in which the paragraphs, texts and fragments of texts are interwoven with the utmost pains and ingenuity, and the very greatest care directed to the preservation of even the smallest words of our four Gospels, it can only be because these four Gospels and the least part of their contents had before this time been received by the Church, as a sacred deposit of Divine truth." Now, when we think of the fact that there were then no steam printing presses, no railroads for rapid distribution, and no general councils to stamp them as authoritative, we must conclude that this result, of a general acceptance in the different districts of all the four Gospels as a divine record of Christ's life, must have required a period of many years' duration. In the words of the same writer, "The Diatessaron proves that, in the minds of the Christian world of that day, every sentence and syllable, every jot and tittle of these Gospels pos-

sessed a peculiar sacredness. Zahn's conclusion, then, cannot be very far from the truth, 'In view of the history of the text, opinions as to the origin of John's Gospel, such as Baur has expressed, must appear simply as madness. It follows, further, that the element which remains the same in all the originals, and of the versions amid all the variations that crept into the text between 150 and 160, must have been everywhere read at the beginning of the second century.' "

They were certainly thus read as soon as the Gospel of John could be reproduced by copyists and distributed.

(c) *Confirms the testimony of Irenæus and Polycarp.*

Irenæus quotes the four Gospels as fully as any modern orthodox theologian would, tells us plainly that there were four Gospels, and only four, and speaks of them as "Holy Scripture." Now, as we have seen, Tatian was the contemporary of Irenæus for about fifty years, and Irenæus speaks of him at some length. When we consider that Tatian was the contemporary of Polycarp, the teacher of Irenæus, for more than forty years, and that Polycarp was a pupil of the Apostle John, and *his* contemporary for more than thirty years, and, then, that this Tatian prepared a harmony of the four Gospels, with that of John most prominent of all, it would seem that we are warranted in saying, as we have done above, that the "Johannean problem" has vanished, and that the apostolic authority of all the Gospels is established.

(d) *Confirms the testimony of Justin Martyr.*

The Diatessaron makes it certain that the "Memoirs of the Apostles" (*ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων*, First Apology, 67), spoken of by Justin Martyr, as read in the worship of the Christians, were our four Gospels, and not any then recent record of verbal traditions. Tatian was the pupil of Justin, and made this harmony of our four Gospels, and, as we have seen, in all probability, composed his harmony in the lifetime of Justin. It is not at all improbable, indeed, that he did it under his supervision and with his help. Those memorials of the Saviour's life which Justin recognized as bearing the stamp of



apostolic authority, and as Holy Scripture, were *our four Gospels*.

The alternative would imply, to employ a quotation of Prof. Basil Gildersleeve, in commenting on these words of Justin Martyr, that "an entire change of Gospels was made throughout all the different and distant provinces of the Roman empire, at a time when concerted action through general councils was unknown, and that, too, in so silent a manner that no record of it remains in the history of the Church."

(e) *Confirms the testimony of the "New Syriac Gospels."*

I was at first led to believe (and, as some may know, expressed the belief) that, in these Gospels, there were marks of manipulation of the account of the nativity of our Saviour in Matt. 1:16, 21 and 25, which indicated that this Syriac text was used in the propagation of the Cerinthian heresy; and Cerinthus was a younger contemporary of the Apostle John. (See Prof. J. Rendell Harris's Art. in *Contemporary Review*, November, 1894.) This, if true, would seem to show that the four Gospels were not only written, but already gathered together, recognized, by heretics as well as the orthodox, as the authoritative records of Christianity, and then translated into Syriac; and that, in the lifetime of a contemporary of the Apostle John. The *Diatessaron* adds much to the probability that Prof. Harris's conclusion is true, as far as the age of these Syriac Gospels is concerned. It shows marks of the Curetonian Syriac text, and, according to Prof. H., this is a revised version of the "New Syriac Gospels" in the interest of orthodoxy. It would seem, then, that these *Lewis Gospels, or Sinaitic palimpsest*, were, so to speak, two generations earlier than the *Diatessaron*, and that they must have been translated near the beginning of the second century.

Mrs. Lewis, the discoverer of the *Sinaitic palimpsest*, wrote me last summer, however, expressing her dissent from Dr. Harris's opinion that the version was Cerinthian in character, and saying that "some of the most eminent scholars in England, France, and Germany, including Dr. Westcott, have

pronounced in favor of its orthodoxy." She afterwards very kindly sent me her own translation of the Gospels, with her Introduction and textual annotations, that the grounds for this opinion might be seen. There is no room to introduce them here,<sup>1</sup> and I am not so presumptuous as to imagine that my opinion in such a matter would have any great weight; but it seems to me that she is fully justified in considering the version orthodox. In such a case, we have to be guided chiefly by the opinions of specialists.

However this point may be decided, there is little if any doubt of the very early origin of this translation of the four Gospels. The Diatessaron is good evidence on this point. Whether the *Sinaitic* or the *Curetonian* is the earlier Syriac version, may be left to the critics to discuss, and if they can do so, decide; but that both are older than the Diatessaron there can be little doubt, as peculiar readings of both these versions are found in it.

The Diatessaron, then, shows that both these versions must have been made early in the second century; and *one* of them *may* have been made before it began.

The only alternative, evidently, is that a Syriac version, the ancestor, so to speak, of both of these, was that from which the Diatessaron was composed, and for the settling of the main question, the genuineness of the Gospels, this would amount to the same thing. It is well nigh certain that both these ver-

---

<sup>1</sup>These grounds may indicate, in a general way, however, by saying that the word "begat," in Matt., 1:16, is taken in a conventional sense, as simply meaning that he was his *legal* father. The whole account certainly, as is said in the Introduction, "presupposes the miraculous conception of our Lord." And Mrs. Lewis adds:

"I may also remark that we do not brand with heresy all the Greek codices which report the words of our Lord's mother in Luke 2:48, 'Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.'"

The same may be said of Luke 2:41, "Now, his *parents* went to Jerusalem every year, &c."

The view taken at first by Prof. Harris is thus referred to:

"Mr. Rendel Harris has given expression to what was at first the prevalent opinion in an able article in the *Contemporary Review* for November, 1894, but the spirited discussion which followed in the *Academy* during the following months did much to clear up our views on the subject, and the matured opinion of some foreign scholars, such as Wellhausen, Zahn, Durand, &c., has been without hesitation in favor of its orthodoxy."

sions precede the Diatessaron, and it has been generally thought that another Syriac version preceded *them*. But, on this point, Dr. Nestle, as high authority on such a subject, probably, as any in the world, is spoken of in Mrs. Lewis's Introduction as considering the Sinaitic version "the very earliest translation of the Gospels into Syriac, on which the Diatessaron and the Curetonian are both founded."

The Diatessaron and Sinaitic palimpsest both lack the account of the woman taken in adultery. This is a characteristic of the earliest texts. But the Sinaitic also lacks the last chapter of Mark after the 8th verse, while the Diatessaron has it. This is one of the many signs that the Sinaitic is earlier than the Diatessaron. It also shows that the Diatessaron drew on some source other than the Sinaitic, (the Curetonian?), for this part of its text.\*

#### CONCLUSION.

##### VII. THE DIATESSARON, AN INDEPENDENT WITNESS.

When the Diatessaron is spoken of as confirming the testimony of so many other witnesses, it should not be inferred that its testimony is in any sense *dependent* on theirs. While it makes clearer and more conclusive the testimony which each of them gives, its own would stand unimpeachable, even on the impossible supposition that theirs could be refuted. Among all these witnesses it occupies a unique position. It is the only copy of the Gospels of that early time that is known to have come from the pen of a well known historical character. It is as certain that Tatian prepared this harmony from the four Gospels in a complete form as any fact of that date can be to us. This, of course, absolutely fixes its date within the narrow limits of a very few years of Tatian's life. Other versions were certainly earlier, at least the one from which this harmony was composed; but the age of each one has to be determined by internal marks. The age of *this* is settled *historically* and without reference to those internal signs by which specialists determine the date of texts.

Pharos, the world's wonder, reared its marble shaft far aloft,

and threw its great light over all the approaches to Alexandria, showing the positions of other landmarks doubtless; but without reference to them, *its* position was well known to all the world, and if *they* had been swept away, *it* would still have served its own great purpose.

Thus, we see the Diatessaron—the fourfold Gospel—standing about a half century after John as a monumental witness of the genuineness of the Gospels which furnish those facts that are the foundation of our faith—facts concerning God’s merciful intervention to save the lost through Jesus Christ, whom He hath anointed and named Jesus “because He shall save His people from their sins”—and revealing to us, so to speak, the locations of other beacons still nearer the shore and shining with the light of all the Gospels.

In plain words, while its own testimony is clear and indubitable, it also serves to emphasize and confirm that of the contemporaries of Tatian, Irenæus, Justin, and Polycarp, and shows us that, in the Syriac version or versions from which it was composed, the Syrian Christians had their need supplied by copies of the four Gospels, complete and distinct, made still earlier.

We may appeal to the common sense of all honest men, and ask, in view of all these facts,

*Is it credible that if the Gospels had been forgeries, the great company of Syrian Christians would have received, as a part of the Holy Scriptures, these versions made, when there were still living thousands of Christians who were contemporaries of the Apostle John in their youth?* The improbability is too great to be entertained for a moment.

The only rational conclusion is that the Gospels thus early received as authoritative, translated, and combined into a harmony, *were* so received and prepared for use because they are genuine; that they were written by the persons whose names they have borne from the first; and that they had the stamp of apostolic approval.

P. P. FLOURNOY.

*Bethesda, Md.*