

with the first verse in John's Gospel. But this Diatessaron dated back to 175 A.D.; and back of that a sufficient period must be allowed for the Gospels to have acquired currency and to have been accepted as sacred. But now we have another version, older even than Tatian's harmony, a version of the four separate Gospels, which we must therefore put back to a period about 150 A.D.; while back of this again we must put the period during which the sacred books gained their currency, and came to be regarded as of such importance that they had to be translated for church use out of the original Greek into Syriac. This brings us very close indeed to the lifetime of the Apostles—indeed, within the lifetime of those who knew them, and were, like Polycarp, their pupils. The possibility of error in ascribing these books to their supposed authors is reduced to a minimum.

Of hardly less importance is the value of this new discovery to the textual critic of the New Testament. We have here a Syriac text which represents a Greek text of about 150 A.D., and which, while it may have been somewhat corrupted from the familiar Diatessaron, or by error of Syriac scribes, has not been touched by Greek influences since its translation. It is a testimony of the first value to one of the types of Greek text as early as 150 A.D. It has its own blunders and additions and omissions, but these can be eliminated with comparative ease, because there is no later Greek corruption.

We have passed the time when we simply compare one ancient Greek manuscript with another, and take the vote of the majority. Critics like Westcott and Hart now divide manuscripts into schools,—Western, Alexandrian, Antiochian, etc.; and may give as much weight to one or two manuscripts which represent one school, as to a dozen of equal age which represent another. One school is treated as one manuscript, just as we have practically only one Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament since the rabbis of Jamnia compiled their one corrected text, to which all those now existing have been made to conform. It is too early yet to announce the result of the comparison of this Sinaitic Old Syriac version with the schools of Greek manuscripts, but it is sufficient to say that in general it sustains the predominant authority of the two great Greek manuscripts, the Vatican and the Sinaitic, while it has some peculiar and erroneous readings of its own. With some examples of its readings this paper must conclude.

It omits, of course, the story of the woman taken in adultery. It omits the concluding clause in the Lord's Prayer. The Book of Mark ends with the eighth verse of the last chapter, differing from the Diatessaron, which is the earliest witness to the last twelve verses. The well-known doubtful verses—Matt. xii. 47; xv. 2, 3; xvii. 21; xviii. 11; xxiii. 13; Mark ix. 44, 46; xv. 28; Luke xxii. 43, 44 (the bloody sweat); xxiii. 34, first clause (Father, forgive them)—are altogether absent, as they are in the Vatican and Sinaitic Greek manuscripts. The words, "For God is a living Spirit," are added to John iii. 6. In Matt. xxvii. 16, 17, we have Jesus Barabbas. It omits "neither the Son" in Matt. xxiv. 36.

But the most extraordinary readings are in the first chapter of Matthew, and are of a kind that would have greatly offended Tatian with his Eucratite tendencies and his rejection of marriage. Verse 16 reads: "Jacob begat Joseph; Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin, begat Jesus, who is called Christ." This making of Joseph the actual father of Jesus is hardly unintentional, for we read in verse 21: "She shall bear to thee a son;" and again in verse 25, instead of the words, "and knew her not until she had brought forth a son," we find, "and she bare to him a son." Yet with this denial of the miraculous birth of our Lord, there is the most positive assertion of it in the rest of the passage. Not only is the word "virgin" inserted in verse 16 (it is also in the Curetonian), but in verse 18 the miraculous birth is distinctly stated: "When Mary, his mother, had been betrothed to Joseph when they were not coming near one to the other, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit;" and in verse 20, "That which is to be born of her is from the Holy Spirit." What was the purpose or meaning of these