

**THE DATE OF OUR  
GOSPELS IN THE LIGHT  
OF THE LATEST CRITICISM**

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The Date of Our Gospels in the Light of the Latest Criticism by Samuel Ives Curtiss

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DATE OF OUR GOSPELS

In the Light of the Latest Criticism.

BY

SAMUEL IVES CURTISS,

PROFESSOR IN CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

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1881.

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## PREFACE.

The following review of Judge Waite's book indicates the opinions of leading New Testament critics of almost every shade of religious belief with reference to the origin of the Gospels. On the one side is a lawyer, who late in life gave attention to these studies; on the other are men who have enjoyed every advantage for preparation in New Testament criticism, and who have devoted their lives to scientific investigations as to the time when the Gospels were composed. I leave the candid reader to judge whether sciolism or science is to determine the question respecting the date of the Evangelic Records.

I have also added a lecture, which is largely based on Norton's *Genuineness of the Gospels*, and which is designed to furnish a cumulative argument, showing what the admission that our Gospels were written in the last quarter of the second century really involves.

I trust that this little treatise may be of some help to every one who sincerely desires to know more as to the origin of the Gospels, and who is not conversant with the general literature of the subject.

SAMUEL IVES CURTISS.

CHICAGO, March 29, 1881.

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REVIEW OF JUDGE WAITE'S "HISTORY OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION TO THE YEAR TWO  
HUNDRED."

## II.

WHEN WERE OUR GOSPELS WRITTEN?



## PART FIRST.

Before entering upon the specific criticism of this book,\* some preliminary remarks are in place. I presume all will agree that there is need of a special training for the pursuit of every science, and that the more advanced the science becomes the greater the necessity of such a training. Before a man can attain eminence in any scientific department he must have mastered all the important discoveries in that department. It would obviously be absurd for a geologist to set himself up as an authority in geology who should be unfamiliar with the views of leading geologists during the last two decades, and who should quote the opinions of men in the last century to establish his positions, when an examination of recent authorities would have prevented him from wasting his time to no purpose. Still there are many who are led by curiosity to pursue studies for which they are unprepared for want of the right training. Their love of knowledge is commendable, and they are deserving of praise so long as they recognize the incompleteness of their inves-

\* *History of the Christian Religion to the Year Two Hundred.* By Charles B. Waite, A. M. Chicago: C. V. Waite & Co., 1881.

tigations. But when they attack established institutions and claim to be public teachers, it is right to try to convince them and the public that they are not scientists, but sciolists; and that the positions which they set forth with so much confidence are due to an ignorance of the subject.

There can be no doubt that Biblical criticism is as truly a science as that of geology or anthropology—a science which has occupied the close attention of many untiring investigators and brilliant students for the last hundred years. These men belong to all schools of belief. So far as they deserve the title of scientists, they are characterized with an ardent love of truth. They would rather make an admission which is unfavorable to them than carry a point by unfair means. Their opinions have been recorded, and although there are many differences among them, it is perfectly possible to ascertain what the consensus of New Testament criticism is; for example, whether critics generally agree that the books of the New Testament did not arise before the last quarter of the second century.

Now there are certain prerequisites which are absolutely necessary for the pursuit of such an investigation. Since German scholars have made such extensive contributions in this department, a familiarity with the German language is abso-

lutely necessary. To lack a knowledge of German is to incapacitate one for becoming a master in this department. This, however, is simply a medium. It is necessary besides to be familiar with the principles of historical and Biblical criticism. Without it the greatest industry will be misdirected. Furthermore, the student must have a complete knowledge of the literature of the subject, and of the best authorities. This is the last place where mere numbers are decisive. Not every book which may have been written on the subject is an authority. The leaders in this department have as clear and settled a reputation as the eminent astronomers or chemists, but they are perhaps less familiarly known to the general public. The last prerequisite which I notice is that of a judicial and unbiased mind. The question is, What are the facts? These must be understood and weighed without regard to the preferences of the writer.

I deem it important to dwell upon these points, not only that the public may see the grounds of my criticisms upon our author, but also that they may be in a position properly to estimate the many similar attempts which will be made in this direction.

Whether Judge Waite would claim the possession of these prerequisites I do not know. The