

**CHRESTOS: A RELIGIOUS
EPITHET; ITS
IMPORT AND INFLUENCE**

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Chrestos: a religious epithet; its import and influence by J. B. Mitchell

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BY

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PREFACE.

THIS brief essay, recently offered as a sessional paper to the Society of Biblical Archæology, was declined by the Council.

When, some four-and-twenty years ago, Mr. (now Sir Henry) Layard, the traveller and great pioneer of Assyrian archæology, on a certain public occasion, was presented to the Town Council of a northern borough by a prominent citizen, the principal credential adduced for him by his introducer was, that he had "done so much for the Bible."

To do as much as possible for the Bible, from an orthodox point of view, would seem to be considered the primary purpose of the Society of Biblical Archæology. Whether that motive be consistent with the true principles of Biblical archæology, as a science, appears to the writer to be open to question.

J. B. M.

PARIS, March 31, 1880.

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AMONG the arguments whereby the early Christians sought to justify themselves, in the eyes of their Pagan fellow citizens, for their religious faith, there was one, drawn from the meaning of the name they were called by, which would seem to have been greatly relied on. As might be expected it had a very prominent place in the kind of composition styled Apology, which was a sort of pleading addressed nominally, at least, to the Roman authorities ; but it is met with in treatises having a different scope. To us more fully-cultured moderns, it is

true, this argument would have very little weight, and might perhaps irreverently be likened to a pun. But when we consider the extent to which the logical method of the Jewish *agadists* was in use among the Patristic writers, we need not hesitate to admit that it was reckoned an argument of great force, and was found to be extremely effective. The method of the *agadists*, which the Jews regarded as highly laudable and rational, and to which they gave the name of *midrasch*, was by no means unknown to other sections of society in the Roman world, being in fact a kind of reasoning whereto the literate classes in uninstructed populations are particularly prone. By its remote and fantastic analogies, metaphors taken literally, ambiguities of all sorts, punning included, took the place of accurate ratiocination. What has been called "the doctrine of signatures," whereby likeness in the shape