

**A HISTORY OF THE NEW
TESTAMENT TIMES;
THE TIME OF JESUS,
VOL. I, PP. 1-269**

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A. HAUSRATH & CHARLES T. POYNTING

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THE TIME OF JESUS.

VOL. I.

A HISTORY
OF THE
NEW TESTAMENT TIMES.

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THE TIME OF JESUS.
VOL. I.

TRANSLATED, WITH THE AUTHOR'S SANCTION, FROM THE SECOND GERMAN
EDITION, BY

CHARLES T. POYNTING, B.A., & PHILIP QUENZER.



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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE History of the New Testament Times is now presented to the reader in a revised and enlarged edition. The latter part of the work, especially, has at the same time been much altered under the influence of Dr. Keim's *Jesus of Nazara*.

In the plan of the book nothing has been altered. The aim in view is still to present a history of the development of culture in the times of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, so far as this development had a direct influence upon the rise of Christianity; and then to give the history of this rise itself, so far as it can be treated as an objective history, and not as a subjective religious process.

The author, in the Preface to the first edition, wrote as follows:

"What we call the sacred history, is the presentation of only the most prominent points of a far broader historical life. The history of the Old Testament has always been treated in connection with the history of Israel; while, on the other hand, the attempt to give a connected presentation of all the historical circumstances which form the basis of the New Testament history and literature, was not made before the time of Dr. Matthew Schneckenburger, owing to the dissimilar character of the materials. For the New Testament history is not like that of the Old Testament, member of one single national development, but displays itself in various territories, and enters into the most

diverse developments. Although the time of Jesus is connected with the confines of Jewish history, yet with every new period does its borders become wider and its perspective more extensive. We have to commence our narrative at the time when affairs in general present themselves in the form reflected by the Gospels. Thus we find ourselves thrown into the first period of the Roman dominion in Judæa. It will be our task to describe this period, so far as its events stand in either direct or indirect relations to the chief religious facts of the New Testament.

" In doing this, there will be no necessity to attempt the useless task of tracing the origin of Christianity itself from the transitory relations of the period. There were at other times, also, favourable relations, operative conditions, and circumstances tending irresistibly to catastrophes, and yet no new religion proceeded from them, because the creative and moulding Spirit was not present in the chaos. Christianity in its essence is the work, not of circumstances, but of Christ. But the personal life, this creative point around which the seething elements are gathered, and that gives form to the molten metal that otherwise becomes dross, this is ever the immediate act of God, which cannot be farther explained or derived. Here is the thread to be sought for which connects things immediately with God. Yet no one will fall into the error of supposing that this sacred history is not a part of the history of the time. It has not been phantasmagorically reflected down from Heaven upon the background of actual history, but has been developed as an actual part of actual history, and amidst the most vigorous reciprocal efforts with the given conditions of the time; although we have been accustomed ourselves to consider it apart from its original connection, as though it were the course of a divine revelation which passed

over all the historical occurrences as well as the life of that generation. Thus the task has arisen of again uniting this New Testament history to the chronological connections in which it stood when it was the present; to observe it, not, indeed, as a product, but yet as a part of a more general historical process; to present it as those who experienced it knew it, mingled and confused with thoroughly secular circumstances.

“In this view of our task there lies, however, a two-fold limitation. Not everything which occurred in the two centuries which we have designated by the name of the ‘New Testament Times,’ can be an object of our study, but only those which stand in connection with the New Testament history. But this history is not, in and for itself, the object of our description; we are concerned only with it in its relation to the time. That this side of the subject also can demand attention, will be denied by none.

“Such an attempt certainly must hold itself, from the first, opposed to both the magical and the mythical derivation of Christianity. Within a purely historical presentation there is no room for the poetical world of the religious Saga; its images fade away when thrown before a clear historical background. The sharper the boundary of terrestrial things is drawn, the less is the place found for good and evil angels. But even that assumption which supposes that the concrete life of the New Testament history is only the mythical figure of the phantasy of a later time, does not find here any support. If we can demonstrate that the sacred history is a fragment of universal history and show how the edges fit, if we can again gather up the broken threads which unite it with the secular world, then the supposition that this history is the beautiful dream of a later generation is excluded.

“Of materials for the solution of this problem there is no want. How things appeared from the standpoint of the upper classes, is best described by Josephus in the palace of the Flavians near the Septizonium; how the ordinary man found them, is known by the expressions of the first Christian communities. The task is to see the circumstances described by Josephus with the eyes of the Evangelists, and from their experiences to complete them; and also to read the narratives of the Gospels in connection with the historical circumstances described by Josephus. So far as the current of the narrative permits, it is the intention of the writer to allow the sources themselves to speak.

“The task, as the writer therefore understands it, is from its very nature a positive one. Not only do the events, considered historically, rest upon a firm foundation, since they are taken in connection with historically certain data, but the figures of the sacred history stand out in sharper outlines when we paint the pale background of the historical circumstances with the deeper colours with which the hand of Josephus especially supplies us. A pleasure in negative results will be found by none in this book. To the writer’s eye, the negative pictures of criticism usually present themselves as positive ones; perhaps often too quickly so. But in any case, for him criticism has value only as means of correction; of negation, never. This will not prevent those who regard the industry and earnest work of our theological tendency only as a species of that obstinacy with which sin adheres to sin, or at the most as the course of headstrong vanity, from pouring out the vials of their wrath upon this book. These people make the mistake of supposing that the present theological position is the mere arbitrary product of some few individuals, and that they can prevent any alteration being made, if only they will exert themselves to embitter the lives of certain