

**A SHORT  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THE GOSPELS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760576448

A short introduction to the Gospels by Ernest DeWitt Burton

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ERNEST DEWITT BURTON**

**A SHORT  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THE GOSPELS**



s. lit.  
omment. in.

# A Short Introduction to the Gospels

By

ERNEST DE WITT BURTON

PROFESSOR OF  
NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION IN  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



122791  
24/6/12

CHICAGO  
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
1906



## PREFACE

THE chief purpose of this little volume is to place before the student of the gospels those facts concerning the purpose and point of view of each of them which are most necessary for an intelligent reading and study of them. A book of narrative character, containing a record of facts, has a value independent of the point of view and purpose of the author. Yet few books are so wholly objective in character, so devoted to the simple reporting of facts, so devoid of all aim to use these facts to achieve a result, that an insight into the mind of the writer does not contribute to an intelligent reading of them. To us today the highest value of the gospels is in the testimony they bring us concerning the deeds, words, and character of the Lord Jesus. Yet it is by no means idle curiosity that impels us to discover all that we can concerning the specific aim with which the several evangelists wrote. Not only is the discovery of the situation out of which each gospel arose, and of the end which the writer of each sought to accomplish, a contribution to the inner history of the early church, precisely as a knowledge of similar facts concerning an epistle of Paul constitutes such a contribution, but the discovery of the angle of vision from which, and the medium through which, the writer looked at Jesus, assists us to interpret each of the several representations of Jesus, and so to relate these one to another that from them all there may emerge the true historic figure of Jesus the Christ.

In the endeavor thus to discover the proper point of

view from which to study each gospel, it is the gospel itself that is our most valuable source of information. All that tradition transmits to us concerning the identity of the author and his aim in writing is sure to be seized upon with eagerness, all the greater because of the meagerness of such testimony, and is rightly scrutinized with the most diligent attention that it may be made to yield all the information that it can supply. Yet at its best tradition tells us but little, and that little only the record of ancient opinion. The internal evidence of the gospels themselves—not the few assertions which they contain concerning authorship and the like, but the constant reflection on every page of the point of view and aim of the evangelist—comes to us at first hand, and, if we are able to interpret it correctly, yields us evidence that cannot be impeached.

It is to this internal evidence that special attention is directed in the following pages. Of the subjects here treated, that which is most necessary and useful for the interpretation of the several gospels is a knowledge of the purpose, point of view, and plan of the gospel. These matters are central in the present treatment. As subsidiary to the search for them, the evidence afforded in the gospels themselves concerning the writer and the readers for whom he wrote is examined. The brief quotations of ancient tradition respecting the authorship of the books fill in the present treatment the place of least importance, serving only to suggest the relation of the external evidence to that internal evidence which is here the almost exclusive subject of study. The full presentation, scrutiny, and weighing of the external testimony lie quite beyond the scope of this book, the specific purpose of



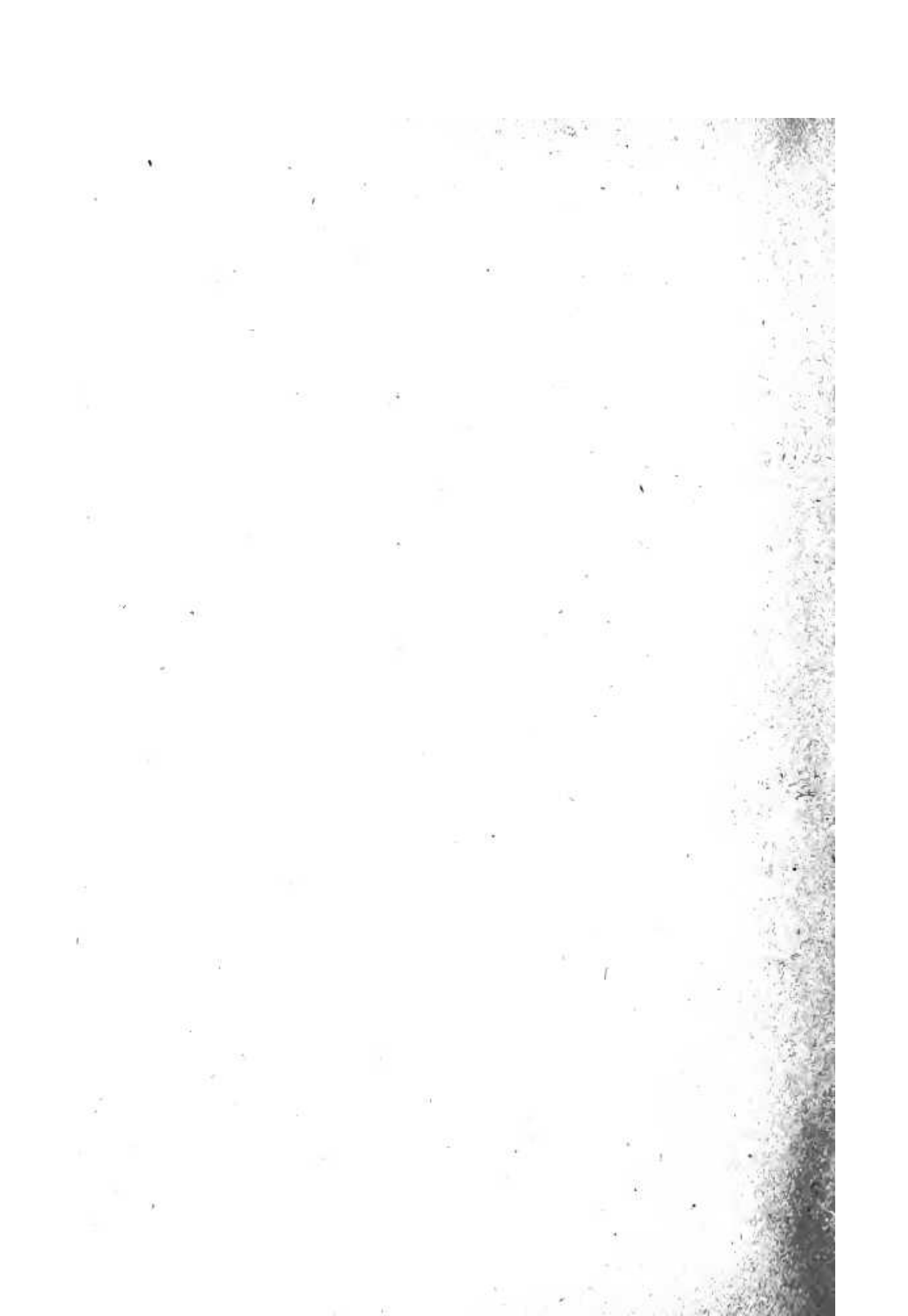
which is to throw upon the gospels the light concerning their origin and purpose which emanates from these gospels themselves.

The chapter on "The Relation of the Synoptic Gospels to One Another" is of a somewhat different character from the others. It is intended to be no more than an introduction to the subject with which it deals. To have presented the evidence on this subject with even that degree of fulness and detail with which the chief topics of the other chapters have been presented would have expanded the book beyond the moderate limits within which it was desired to keep it, and would have made it less adapted to the use which it is intended to serve, viz., as an introduction to the gospels for the use of students in college or in the first year of a theological course. It is the hope of the author at a later time to deal more adequately with this important subject.

Of the several chapters contained in this volume all except the fourth were originally published in the *Biblical World* for 1898, 1899, and 1900. They were subsequently reprinted in pamphlet form under the title *The Purpose and Plan of the Four Gospels*. They are now again reprinted, having undergone considerable revision, but without material change of plan or content.

ERNEST D. BURTON.

CHICAGO, April, 1904.



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW . . . .	1-26
CHAPTER II. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK . . . .	27-45
CHAPTER III. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE . . . .	46-79
CHAPTER IV. THE RELATION OF THE SYN- OPTIC GOSPELS TO ONE ANOTHER . . . .	80-98
CHAPTER V. THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN . . . .	99-141
INDEX . . . . .	143, 144