

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO THE
HEBREWS, ITS FRAGMENTS TR. AND
ANNOTATED, WITH A CRITICAL
ANALYSIS OF THE EXTERNAL AND
INTERNAL EVIDENCE RELATING TO IT**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649595570

The Gospel According to the Hebrews, Its Fragments Tr. And Annotated, with a Critical Analysis of the External and Internal Evidence Relating to It by Edvard Byron Nicholson

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EDVARD BYRON NICHOLSON

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Edward B. Nicholson
- my corrected copy

THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO
THE HEBREWS

ITS FRAGMENTS TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED

WITH A

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL
EVIDENCE RELATING TO IT

BY

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C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1879



W. B. Nicholson
1912

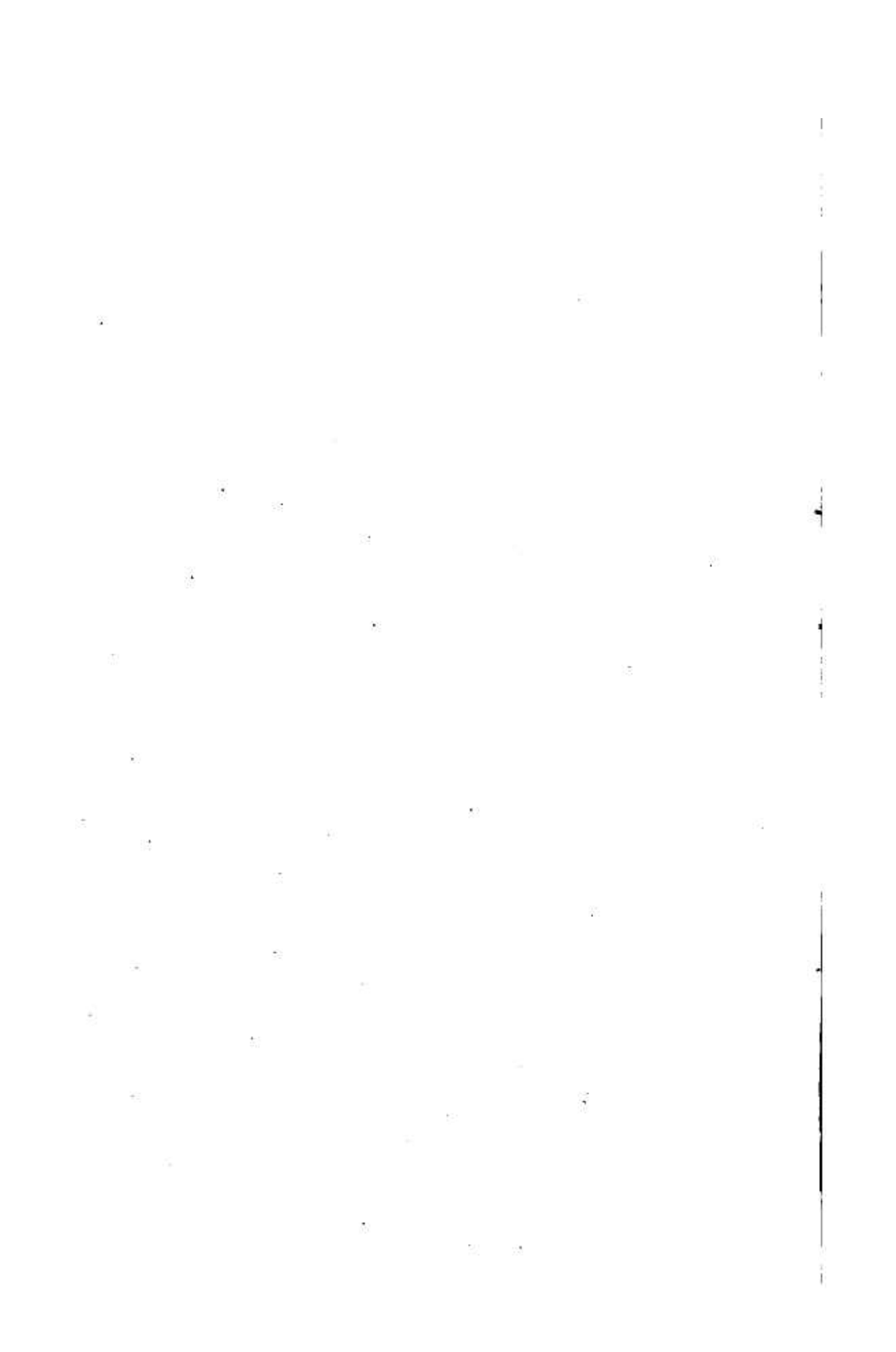
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TO THE
REV. HENRY HALL-HOUGHTON, M.A.

(WITHOUT KNOWING HIM OR ASKING HIS LEAVE)

I Dedicate this Book

AS THE FIRST OUTCOME OF STUDIES TO WHICH I WAS LED BY HIS
FOUNDATION, JOINTLY WITH THE LATE REV. JOHN HALL, B.D.,
OF THE HALL-HOUGHTON PRIZES IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



FOREWORDS.

IN writing an illustrative commentary (which will be published next January) upon the Gospel according to Matthew, I had to quote those fragments of the Gospel according to the Hebrews which answer to Matt. vi. 11 and xxiii. 35. This involved some notice of that work, and, as critical opinion about it was by no means unanimous, I resolved to make a full examination of it in an appendix. The appendix, however, soon became very awkwardly long, and was moreover entirely out of character with the nature of my commentary; so that I determined to put it forth as a separate book.

No apologies need be made for doing this. Hilgenfeld's edition shows that even in Germany the subject is far from worked out; while the passage of *twenty-six lines in Professor Westcott's *Canon of the New Testament* which purports to present the opinions of antiquity about this lost Gospel, and which has been reprinted without change twice if not three times since the appearance of Hilgenfeld's edition, shows that in England even Hilgenfeld is all but unknown.

I have aimed at accuracy and logical method, and have no excuses to make if I have fallen short of these aims. As regards completeness, I have not indeed spent a lifetime in ransacking the entire body of early Christian literature, or even Syriac literature, in search of undiscovered quotations

* See *Appendix A*, 'Prof. Westcott's Statement of the External Evidence.'

from and notices of the Gospel according to the Hebrews: nay, I have not tried to acquaint myself with what has been said by every modern, even every German writer upon the subject. I have, indeed, presumed that Hilgenfeld would have gathered from his forerunners whatever was worth gathering in the way of illustration, and theory I did not want. With these reservations I think I may claim to have studied completeness.

For the style of my translations I must ask indulgence. Scrupulous exactness was so important that I have tried to be as literal as might be without being altogether unreadable. One thing I do most earnestly beg, that no one will be prejudiced against the claims of the Fragments to genuine evangelical origin by their look in their English dress. If, however, the Greek is read as well, or the notes containing a verbal analysis, or if the equally literal translations made by me from the canonical Gospels are compared, I have no fear of any such prejudice arising.

To any one who may have read and liked a little book in which I expressed certain views about English writing, and in which I tried to carry out those views as far as I dared, I must also excuse the *general style* of the work: it was written before, though published after the other, and I have had no time to write it over again.

It is important to add in what spirit I have written. The subject is one on which it is almost impossible to be without a fore bias. One may be biased against the Gospel according to the Hebrews by its absence from the Canon or by suspicion of the sects who used it. One may be biased for it by hostility to the Canon, by belief in an Aramaic original of the Gospel according to Matthew, by prepossessions in favour of the Nazarenes, by some of the Fragments themselves, and by a wish to recover some genuine part of the lost mass of early evangelic literature. I wish to say that I have been biased by every one of this latter class of influences except the first. But I have done my best to overcome this

bias, and have been painfully anxious to state nothing as probable which was not so, and nothing as certain which was only highly probable. Nor can I see what other deductions it was possible to make from the evidence before me. If a copy of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, or of either of Jerome's translations of it, should ever be recovered—which, judging from the recoveries of the last forty years, is by no means out of the question—my hypothesis might be blown to the winds. But I do not see how any other hypothesis was nearly so probable on the evidence presented by the existing Fragments taken in conjunction with the existing evidence of ancient writers.

I have had much help from the thirty-three pages given to this Gospel by Hilgenfeld in Fasciculus IV. of his *Novum Testamentum extra Canonem Receptum* (Lips. 1866). His examination of the external evidence is, however, but a sketch, while his internal evidence (scattered through the notes) is for the most part, I think, quite destitute of value. He sees almost everywhere a form of narrative earlier than that of the Greek Matthew, but his reasons seem to me in the highest degree fanciful. There is no approach to systematic verbal analysis, and the impetuosity of judgement which affirms* that the Gospel according to the Hebrews offers to those who are investigating the origin of the canonical Gospels the long sought 'punctum Archimedis' is characteristic of the entire work. But I have had from it much help in many ways which I might not have got, at least without great trouble, from other sources, and I record the above criticisms only that those who cannot compare the two works may not suspect me of much greater indebtedness than I like to acknowledge. I must also acknowledge a heavy debt to his sections on *the Gospel according to Peter*,

* 'Hebraeorum evangelium nobis evangeliorum originem investigantibus etiam nunc Archimedis punctum praebet, quod tot viri docti in evangelio secundum Marcum frustra quaesiverunt,' p. 13.