

**THE EPISTLE TO THE
HEBREWS: ITS DOCTRINE
AND SIGNIFICANCE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649210411

The Epistle to the Hebrews: its doctrine and significance by E. F. Scott

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ITS DOCTRINE AND SIGNIFICANCE

BY

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Edinburgh : T. & T. CLARK, 38 George Street
1922

EMMANUEL

STOR

PRINTED BY
MILLER AND GIBB LIMITED,
FOR

T. & T. CLARK, EDINBURGH.

LONDON: SIMPSON, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, AND CO. LIMITED.

NEW YORK: CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS.

P R E F A C E.



It is only of late years that anything like an adequate study has been bestowed on the Epistle to the Hebrews. A few great passages of the Epistle have always been among the most familiar in scripture, but even professed theologians have concerned themselves little with its teaching as a whole. This neglect has been partly due to the character of the argument, which is cast in an archaic mould, and often impresses a modern reader as barren and artificial. To a still greater extent the Epistle has suffered from the mistaken views that have prevailed as to its nature and purpose. It has been commonly regarded as a mere appendix to the Pauline writings, or as a tract that has survived from a forgotten controversy, or at best as the manifesto of some isolated sect. A work that appeared to count for so little in the main development of Christian thought has not un-naturally been pushed into the background.

Within the last generation much has been done, and especially by English writers, to atone for past neglect of the Epistle. Not to mention a number of excellent commentaries, its teaching has been interpreted by such

distinguished scholars as Dr. A. B. Bruce and Dr. G. Milligan, and more recently in a beautiful and suggestive book, *The Epistle of Priesthood*, by Dr. A. Nairne. Another work on the same subject may be reckoned superfluous, but it appears to me that the writers just named, while they have illuminated many dark places in the Epistle, have been warped in their approach to it by the old prepossessions, and have thereby overlooked some of its essential aspects.

No excuse, however, is needed for making a new attempt to expound this noble New Testament writing. For many reasons, as I have tried to show in the concluding chapter, the Epistle to Hebrews, for all its air of antiquity, makes a peculiar appeal to the mind of our own age. It deals with questions which are ultimately the same as those which are now perplexing us, and suggests answers to them which are still valid. This has been felt by many, in all the Christian churches, who vaguely perceive the drift of the argument but cannot follow it in detail. I have tried in the present book to examine this difficult Epistle from several new points of view, and to throw some clearer light on its underlying ideas.

E. F. SCOTT.

NEW YORK,
June 1922.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.



CHAPTER I.

THE LITERARY PROBLEMS.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews is in many respects the riddle of the New Testament. Nothing is known of its origin; no agreement has yet been reached as to its literary character and theological affinities; the more it is studied in detail the more it abounds in problems — historical, doctrinal, exegetical — which seem to defy solution. Among early Christian writings it stands solitary and mysterious, “without father, without mother, without genealogy,” like that Melchizedek on whom its argument turns.

Almost from the beginning the church was aware of something strange and perplexing about this Epistle. As one of the most ancient and valuable of Christian books it had a paramount claim to a place in the New Testament, but this place was not fully conceded to it for several centuries. The earliest critics, like their modern successors, were puzzled by it, and were un-