

**CANONICAL AND UNCANONICAL
GOSPELS; WITH A TRANSLATION
OF THE RECENTLY DISCOVERED
FRAGMENT OF THE GOSPEL OF
PETER**

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Canonical and Uncanonical Gospels; With a Translation of the Recently Discovered Fragment of the Gospel of Peter by W. E. Barnes

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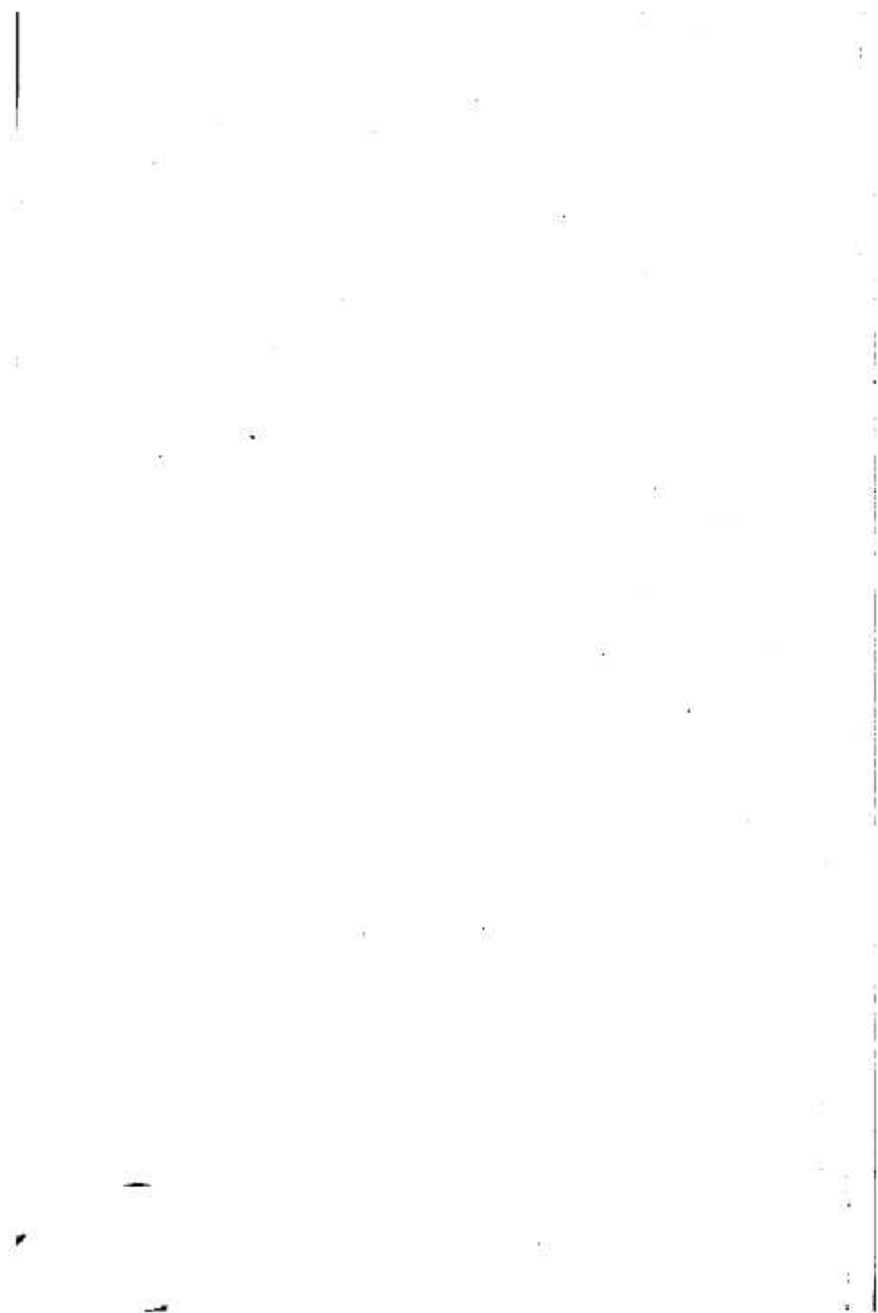
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W. E. BARNES

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With a Translation of the Recently Discovered Fragment of the
Gospel of Peter, and a Selection from the Sayings of Our
Lord not found in the Four Gospels.

BY
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P R E F A C E

My object in writing the following pages is to throw light on a subject on which many important misconceptions prevail. Even educated people are content to speak as if the Four Gospels had no history at all, or as if they first appeared in the fourth century A.C., coming from an unknown source. This treatise, therefore, will not be wholly useless if it makes it clear that the Canonical Gospels were beyond all doubt received as The Four Authoritative Gospels at least one hundred and twenty years before Constantine established Christianity as the State religion. Neither the first Christian emperor (311-337 A.D.), nor the great Council of Nicæa (325 A.D.), had anything to do with "selecting," as some have supposed, our Four out of a large number of Gospels. If our Gospels were ever "selected" (and did not rather hold a position of authority from the first), the selection

Recd. M. V. P. 12-7-39

took place apart from the worldly influence of a half-pagan emperor, and certainly more than a century before his reign. In the time of Constantine, our Gospels had already a long and honourable history behind them.

But I do not write these pages simply to disprove the notion that the Gospels first became authorities in the fourth century A.C. Still more prevalent is the more plausible contention that the Four Gospels (with the exception of S. Luke) are not to be traced during the hundred and fifty years which immediately followed Our Lord's death. One object of this book is to show that this contention is false, and that even if it were true, it would be misleading. The main features of the Story of Christ's Life can be traced back continuously to within thirty years of His death. The *narrative* cannot be shaken, even if the usual authorities for it be proved to be more recent than we believe.

The argument might have been much strengthened by a statement of the evidence to be derived from the use of one or all of our Four Gospels by the chief schools of heretics of the second century. Even the author of "Supernatural Religion" admits that the evidence to be derived

from Marcion's Gospel proves the existence of our Gospel of S. Luke as early as 140 A.D. But this evidence, together with other evidence drawn from the practice of heretical schools, is not given here, because it consists chiefly of a mass of linguistic detail. It may, however, be mentioned that all schools of Christian Gnostics of the second century, the Ophites, the Basilideans and the Eastern and Western schools of the Valentinians all alike appealed to our Gospel of S. John.

On the other hand, I have been careful to notice any evidence recently brought to light. Such evidence will be found chiefly under "Tatian" and "Hermas." I have also tried to impart some freshness to the treatment of the subject by drawing from the original authorities wherever it was possible. This is especially the case with Eusebius, Justin, and Tatian.

The rôle of an Apologist is an unpopular one, for it is supposed to be incompatible with a genuine search for truth. I confess that I am not dispassionate; I am not indifferent which way the controversy is decided. I rejoice that I am led to the conclusion that the evidence for the authority of our Gospels is not weak but

strong. Yet such a temper can well coexist with a resolution to learn the truth. A complete Apologist has to apologize to himself as well as to his fellow-men; what is meat for them is meat for him; husks for them are husks for him too.

W. E. B.

CAMBRIDGE,
February, 1893.