THE LOST GOSPEL AND ITS CONTENTS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649639687

The Lost Gospel and Its Contents by M. F. Sadler

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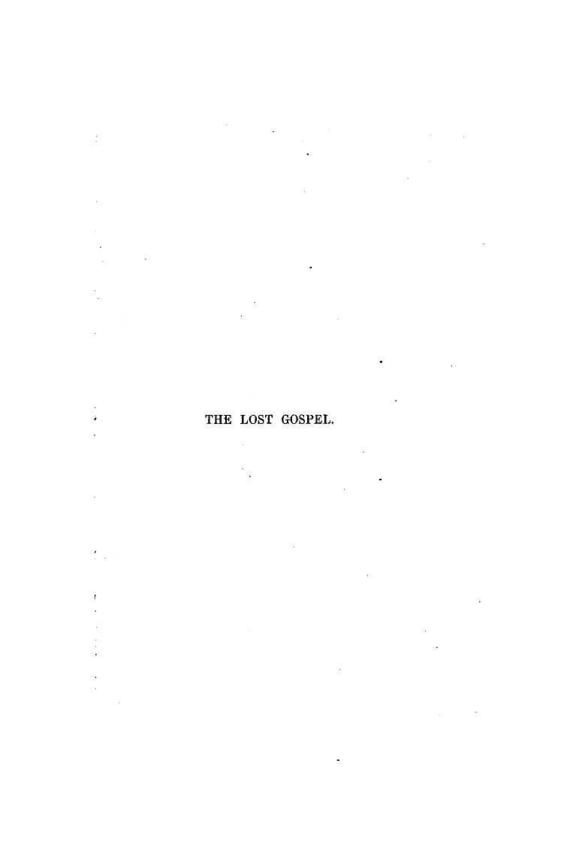
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M. F. SADLER

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THE LOST GOSPEL AND ITS CONTENTS;

OR,

THE AUTHOR OF "SUPERNATURAL RELIGION"
REFUTED BY HIMSELF.

BY THE REV. M. F. SADLER, M.A., RECTOR OF HONITON.



GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

1876.

PREFACE.

THIS book is entitled "The Lost Gospel," because the book to which it is an answer is an attempt to discredit the Supernatural element of Christianity by undermining the authority of our present Gospels in favour of an earlier form of the narrative which has perished.

It seemed to me that, if the author of "Supernatural Religion" proved his point, and demonstrated that the Fathers of the Second Century quoted Gospels earlier than those which we now possess, then the evidence for the Supernatural itself, considered as apart from the particular books in which the records of it are contained, would be strengthened; if, that is, it could be shown that this earlier form of the narrative contained the same Supernatural Story.

The author of "Supernatural Religion," whilst he has utterly failed to show that the Fathers in question have used earlier Gospels, has, to my mind, proved to demonstration that, if they have quoted earlier narratives, those accounts contain, not only substantially, but in detail, the same Gospel which we now possess, and in a form rather more suggestive of the Supernatural. So that, if he has been successful, the author has only succeeded in proving that the Gospel narrative itself, in a written

form, is at least fifty or sixty years older than the books which he attempts to discredit.

With respect to Justin Martyr, to the bearing of whose writings on this subject I have devoted the greater part of my book, I can only say that, in my examination of his works, my bias was with the author of "Supernatural Religion." I had hitherto believed that this Father, being a native of Palestine, and living so near to the time of the Apostles, was acquainted with views of certain great truths which he had derived from traditions of the oral teaching of the Apostles, and the possession of which made him in some measure an independent witness for the views in question; but I confess that, on a closer examination of his writings, I was somewhat disappointed, for I found that he had no knowledge of our Lord and of His teaching worth speaking of, except what he might be fairly assumed to have derived from our present New Testament.

I have to acknowledge my obligations to Messrs. Clark, of Edinburgh, for allowing me to make somewhat copious extracts from the writings of Justin in their ante-Nicene Library. This has saved a Parish Priest like myself much time and trouble. I believe that in all cases of importance in which I have altered the translation, or felt that there was a doubt, I have given the original from Otto's edition (Jena, 1842).

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THE LOST GOSPEL.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTORY.

In the following pages I have examined the conclusions at which the author of a book entitled "Supernatural Religion" has assumed to have arrived.

The method and contents of the work in question may be thus described.

The work is entitled "Supernatural Religion, an Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation." Its contents occupy two volumes of about 500 pages each, so that we have in it an elaborate attack upon Christianity of very considerable length. The first 200 pages of the first volume are filled with arguments to prove that a Revelation, such as the one we profess to believe in, supernatural in its origin and nature and attested by miracles, is simply incredible, and so, on no account, no matter how evidenced, to be received.

But, inasmuch as the author has to face the fact, that the Christian Religion professes to be attested by miracles performed at a very late period in the history of the