

**TRACES OF GREEK
PHILOSOPHY AND ROMAN
LAW IN THE NEW
TESTAMENT. [LONDON-1896]**

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Traces of Greek Philosophy and Roman Law in the New Testament. [London-1896] by Edward Hicks

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EDWARD HICKS

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OF
GREEK PHILOSOPHY AND
ROMAN LAW
IN THE
NEW TESTAMENT.

BY
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PREFACE.

THE work here presented is but a sketch. When first written, the idea of publishing was not entertained. It was an essay offered for the degree of D.D. in the University of Durham. The Professor of Divinity, in adjudicating upon it, deemed it worthy of publication, either in whole or in part, and urged the usefulness of such a course.

The title will show that the range of subject is limited both in scope and time. The brief work treats only of two questions, and it relates to the Church history of the first century. It is an attempt to show the probable influence, in character and extent, of Greek philosophy and Roman law on the minds of the New Testament writers; the contribution made by each to the doctrinal thought, or to its formal expression in language; and to exhibit how, in a general way

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as well as in closer detail, the Gospel was thus assisted in its proclamation amongst mankind. The subject deserves and demands closer and more extended study, to which these pages may, I hope, act as an incentive.

It may be permitted to say that in speculating concerning religion, as well as in science, each hypothesis suggested ought not only to be *adaequata*, i. e. sufficient to explain the phenomena which are under investigation, but also *vera*, i. e. not only a real fact in Nature, but a fact which can be proved to have relation to the special point. If the former condition be met, while the latter is neglected, the hypothesis is a possibility; not a probability; still less a certainty.

My desire has been to exhibit the scope and force of Greek philosophy and of Roman law; not speculating vaguely on their possible influence, but estimating their effects according to the weight which evidence and historic fact offer. With the projection into the New Testament narratives of pagan legendary miracle or of heathen folk-lore, as asserted by some, I have nothing here to do. I will only say that with the attempts which have been made to trace Christian institutions to a heathen source or mythological origin, e. g. to the Eleusinian mysteries, or, again, to assign the idea of a virgin birth to mythology, I am wholly out of sympathy.

The last great fact stands apart, on its own basis of evidence and Divine probability, unaffected by Philonean allegorizing or Greek and Egyptian fable. The same is true as regards the integrant conceptions of Christian Theology. The inquiry I have followed, and the line of thought taken, are in a different plane.

I trust that that modesty which is demanded by Theology, as by all sciences, at the hands of inquirers, will not be found to be overstepped in the following pages; and that the reverence due to the inspired Scriptures has nowhere been forgotten.

The first division of our subject, that devoted to the Greek philosophy, is necessarily the larger in bulk, as touching a much wider literature and running in more extended and less direct avenues. The authorities consulted in this portion are, of course, open to all. I have, I hope, duly expressed acknowledgements wherever necessary. In the second portion, which has been to me, I confess, the more interesting, as allowing of more definite treatment, and touching, for the most part, untrodden ground, authorities, after works of a strictly legal character, are not so easily found. I am indebted to some extent to Dr. W. E. Ball, whose article in the *Contemporary* for August, 1891, though only seen two years after the completion of this portion

of my work, has suggested additional thoughts by its felicitous language. Also to Dr. Curwen, Rector of Plumbland, Carlisle, for some thoughts in an essay presented for his degree of D.C.L. in the University of Durham. His explanation by means of the Praetorian Will (see p. 158) of a passage in the Revelation of St. John (v. 1), may rank as an exegetical discovery.

E. H.

March, 1896.

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