

The New Sayings of Jesus and the Synoptic Problem

Professor Kirsopp Lake
University of Leiden.

When Drs Grenfell and Hunt in 1897 brought from Oxyrhynchus a fragment of a papyrus book containing Sayings of Jesus, which were clearly not derived from the Canonical Gospels, hopes were generally expressed that the discovery would be supplemented by further fragments from the same collection.

Now that hope has been justified, and they have given to the world the beginning of the collection of the Sayings of Jesus, of which they found part in 1897, though the new fragment is part of another manuscript, many points of interest naturally have been raised, but in the present paper I only wish to draw attention to the title of the of the collection in connection with the history of early Christian literature.

It runs "These are the (wonderful?) Sayings which Jesus the living (Lord?) spake to . . . and Thomas and he said to them, . . ." and affords, as the Editors points out, a remarkable justification of two comments which were made on the first fragment.

Dr. Lock suggested that the title *Logia*, which Drs Grenfell and Hunt adopted in 1897, was not quite justifiable, and regarded *Logoi* or *Sayings* as more probable: few criticisms have ever been more completely justified. The title has been found, and it is *Logoi*, not *Logia*.

In a similar way, Dr Rendel Harris, in the *Contemporary Review* of September, 1897, discussed the way in which the beginning of the collection may have been worded. His method was to bring together four well-known passages in which a somewhat peculiar form of citation is used, namely –

- (1) Remembering the words of the Lord that he said Acts xx. 35.
- (2) Remembering the words of Jesus the Lord which he spake Clem. ep. ad. Cor. xiii. 1.
- (3) Remember the words of Jesus our Lord, for he said Clem. ep. ad. Cor. xlvii. 7.
- (4) Remember what the Lord said Polycarp 2.

The conclusion which he drew from these passages was that there was in existence in the first and second centuries a collection of the *sayings of the Lord* known to Paul, Clement, and Polycarp, which began "We ought to remember what things our Lord said in his teaching, for he said"

The similarity of this to the beginning of the new sayings is remarkable (though it is the irony of fate that the part on which Dr. Rendel Harris was most probably confident, viz, "We ought to remember," is just the part which finds no support in the papyrus), and it is hardly too much to say that the existence in the second century (at the least) of such a collection of sayings such as he suggested is now raised to the level of fact established by documentary evidence. The question remains, Is it probable that it was known to Paul, to Clement, and Polycarp, and if so, what relation does it bear to the mass of facts and theories which go to make up the Synoptic problem?

In the first place, as an amendment to Dr. Harris' proposition, I would suggest that Luke should be read in the place of Paul; the reference to *Words* or *Sayings* in Acts xx. 35, it is true, placed in the latter's mouth, but it is very improbable that the speeches in Acts represent verbatim reports rather than Luke's compositions, either based on general accounts or on his own views of what might have been said, in the way practiced by historians.

How far, then, is it probable that the saying quoted above from Acts (=Luke), Clement and Polycarp imply a knowledge, at the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries, of a definite collection of *Sayings* such as the Oxyrhynchus fragments preserve?

It has generally been admitted that the formula of quotation used by these writers refers to some definite tradition as to Christ's words. The only question raised has been whether this tradition was written or oral. The sayings in Acts has generally been ascribed to oral, and the sayings in Clement and Polycarp to written tradition, preserved either in our Gospels or in their predecessors, but, probably because of the ordinary character of the word "sayings," its common use by the three writers has not often been regarded as referring to the title of the source of the quotations. It has been felt that "Sayings" is so little remarkable a word that it is unnecessary to suppose that it is a definitive title of a book, and to write it *Sayings* rather than *sayings*.

It is at this point that the new discovery is so important; it shows that *Sayings* was the definitive title of a definitive book, and the critical situation is now reversed. Formerly it was possible to argue that *Sayings* is not a technical title, and that before Dr Rendel Harris could substantiate his claim he must show that the use of the word in Acts, Clement and Polycarp was not due to the merest coincidence in a very small natural phrase. Criticism knew nothing of any collection of our Lord's words entitled *Sayings*, and Dr Rendel Harris seemed to have no very conclusive answer. Now, however, it is his turn and he can ask his critics why, since *Sayings* is proved to have been in use as a title, they hesitate in recognizing that allusions to it in the four passages in question, – and they in turn seem to have no adequate reply.

This is not to assert that Drs Grenfell and Hunt have found a MS. of the original collection of sayings. All that we can say is that Clement, Polycarp and Luke quote different sayings of Jesus, probably from a collection entitled *Sayings*, and Drs Grenfell and Hunt have found a collection with this title. The presumption is perhaps slightly in favor of the view that it is not the original document, but is based on it. It is, however, impossible to prove this, or to show that it ever contained the same sayings as were quoted by Luke, Clement and Polycarp, and the question in this way presents at the same time a parallel and a contrast to the problem afforded by the relation which subsist between the Synoptic Gospels and the quotations of the words of our Lord in the Apostolic Fathers.

We have in the latter several probable allusions to the same tradition as are preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, but there is no mention of these by name. The evidence is solely the evidence of identity of language and subject matter. Therefore, while it is possible that we have in these allusions traces of the use of our Gospels themselves, it is equally possible to explain them as due to a knowledge of the material which was used by the compilers of the Canonical books. Similarly we have known references to a collection of *Sayings* and a fragment of a document bearing this title. But the reason for bringing these facts into close connection is solely that of identity of title; there is no evidence for or against the theory of similarity of contents, so that whereas in the one case we can prove similarity of contents but not identity of title, in the other we show identity of title but not similarity of contents, and in both cases the deficiency of evidence may perfectly well be accidental.

But it may be well to ask whether we can find further allusions to a collection entitled *Sayings* in early Christian literature.

One thinks at once of a famous group of passages (I Tim. i. 15, iii. 1, iv. 9, 2 Tim. ii. 11, and Tit. iii. 8) in the Pastoral Epistles, which contain the phrase *Faithful is the saying*, for it has often been suggested that the reiteration of the phrase implies quotation. This may well be; but at first sight, at all events, it seems not quite probable that the document from which the writer is quoting is a collection of *the Sayings of the Lord*, unless indeed he is quoting very loosely. For instance, in 2 Tim. . ii. 11 the *Faithful saying* is probably the sentences following – “For if we died with him we shall also live with him; if we endure we shall also reign with him, etc.,” which, unless St Paul is changing his quotation from the third person, can scarcely be taken from a collection of the *Sayings of the Lord*. I should not like to build any argument on the supposition that St Paul was not quoting loosely in this way, but it would be wrong to assume that he is so doing in order to make his words evidence that for the existence of the collection which we are considering. These passages, therefore, had better be left on one side.

A possible reference may also be sought in Rev. xxi. 5: "And he saith, Write for these words (Sayings) are faithful and true," but it is difficult either to prove or to refute the suggestion, though the recurrence of the word *faithful*, taken in connection with passages in the Pastoral Epistles, is perhaps sufficiently striking to suggest that *faithful* or *true* are more probable than *wonderful* in the reconstruction of the title of the new fragment.

Let me turn to another source of information.

So much has been written concerning the famous quotation from Papias in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk. III., 39, that one hesitates to suggest anything fresh in connection with it; yet a comparison with the title of the new papyrus is certainly tempting. It will be remembered that Papias, speaking of Mark, after saying that he reproduced the preaching of St Peter, goes on to state that the latter "framed his teaching to meet the immediate want of his hearers, but not as making a collection of the Lord's sayings." The obvious inference from this is that Papias was contrasting the teaching of Peter and the Gospel of Mark, which was a representation of it, with the work of someone else who had made a collection of *Sayings*. If so, Papias must have known some such collection, and probably attributed it to some contemporary of Mark. It has been assumed by some that he is only referring to *the Logia* which he ascribes to Matthew, but we have now at length learnt the truth of Dr Salmon's statement that *Logoi* is not *Logia*, though some scribes of Eusebius altered the text so as to leave no room for doubt on the point. Others again – such as, I believe, Dr Julicher – think Papias is throughout this passage contrasting the Synoptic Gospels with the Johannine. I would submit, however, that the strict interpretation of Papias' words is that he refers to three documents –

- (1) St Mark's version of St Peter's teaching.
- (2) An anonymous collection of the *Sayings of the Lord*.
- (3) *The Logia* of St Matthew.

It is, of course, possible that the Matthean *Logia* were only the *Sayings* under a title of greater distinction – in fact, that, like Drs Granfell and Hunt in 1897, he found *Sayings* and called them *Logia*, but it is somewhat more probable that the document to which Papias refers was a definite recension of the original *Sayings* made perhaps for catechetical purposes, as this theory more readily explains the signs of numerous arrangements which, as Sir John Hawkins had pointed out in *Horae Synopticae*, pp. 131-135, exist especially in those parts of the First Gospel, which probably represent the Matthean *Logia*.

This suggestion may also derive some support from a comparison of the three titles – *Sayings*, *the Logia*, and *Gospel*.

Sayings is certainly the simplest, and, therefore, is on a *a priori* grounds, likely to be the earliest. The *Logia* or *Oracles* seem to imply a conscious comparison with the Old Testament, which was not seldom referred to under this name. *Gospel*, in its technical sense seems to imply the most developed thought and to be the latest of the three. Moreover, it is quite possible that some direct references to the *Sayings* are preserved in the Logian parts of the First Gospel. It is well known that Papias wrote five books of commentary on the *Logia*. The obvious deduction (though, obviously not a certain one) is that the comment had a fivefold division, because the text commented on had one also, and Sir John Hawkins on p. 132 of his *Horae Synopticae* points out a convincing reason for regarding this obvious deduction as correct, when he shows that the collection of *Logia* used by the compiler of the First Gospel was divided into five *Pereqs* or Chapters, the endings of which can be traced in Matt. vii. 28; xi. 1; xiii. 53; xix. 1; xxvi. 1.

It is surely a very strong point in favor of the theory that it was based on an earlier collection of *Sayings*, that in three out of these five passages, the formula from which Sir John draws his conclusion is, "When Jesus had finished these sayings."

From Papias and the Matthaean *Logia* the student of the Synoptic Gospels naturally expect to be led to the preface of St Luke, which, in spite of its apparent simplicity, has been used as the foundation of so many varying theories.

It has been shown that there is some reason for thinking that Luke knew of a book entitled *Sayings*, and quoted it in Acts xx. 35. It is therefore not improbable that he alludes to it in his preface. In this he is telling us (1) that many have tried to set out an account of the "things fulfilled among us"; (2) that he had done this himself with unusual care, using original sources; (3) that his object was to assure Theophilus of the certainty of the *Sayings* concerning which he had been instructed.

The wide meaning of *Sayings* once more renders the point doubtful, but the word translated *instructed* is at least probably technical, and refers to organized instruction, and if *Sayings* was the title of the book, it may have been Luke's intention to remind Theophilus of the definite instruction which he had received, and of the book on which it was based. In fact, Luke seems to be claiming to give the historical setting for the teaching which Theophilus had first received in the form of a manual instruction, and this accords with the fact which has been so often noted that Luke often gives the historical setting for teaching, which none has in Matthew.

If this be so, we may take it as probable that the book of *Sayings* lies much behind the First and Third Gospels; by Luke it was used directly, but by the compiler of the First Gospel

probably in the form of the edition made by Matthew, which was known to Papias as *the Logia*.

What, however, is to be said of this theory of the allusion in the papyrus to Thomas? I think it is fairly obvious that this collection of sayings cannot be identified with the Gospel of Thomas, and am inclined to suggest that the original *Sayings* were an anonymous collection. One redaction of them became *the Logia* of Matthew, and this was used by the compiler of the First Gospel, to which it gave its name. Another redaction was associated with the name of Judas Thomas, and may have been used by the compiler of the Gospel of that name, which I see no reason for to have been originally merely the fragment of narratives referring to the childhood of the Lord, which is still extant. This is, of course, merely conjecture, but the same may be said of all theories as to the origins of early Christian literature: the only test which can be applied is that afforded by their power to co-ordinate facts supplied by literary criticism and archaeological research.

It may be perhaps not be out of place to anticipate one objection to these suggestions. Their central point is the theory that a collection of sayings similar to the Oxyrhynchus papyri was in existence earlier than our First and Third Gospels, and probably contemporaneous to the Second. They are directly opposed to the preference shown by Dr Sanday, in his lecture on the first fragment, for the view that the *Sayings* had their origin under conditions of thought which the Gospels had created. They rather imply that they are the product of the same conditions as those which gave rise to the Canonical books. Dr Sanday's opinion is one which has a value because it is his, as well as because of the arguments which he advances, but I think, though I am not sure, that at least one of the presuppositions which weigh with him is that a desire to know the facts of the ministry must have preceded the desire to know the sayings of our Lord independently of their historical context. It is this belief which also seems consciously or unconsciously to have lain behind the theories of those who, like professor Harnack, were inclined, at least, until the publication of the new fragments, to regard the new *Sayings* as extracts from lost Gospels, especially the Gospel according to the Egyptians and according to the Hebrews. Is this presupposition valid? I would submit that it is more than probable that the earliest generation of Christians were more anxious "to remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ." Than to picture his doings among the Jews and the facts of His ministry. So far as Jewish circles were concerned, this seems to me almost to be proved by the analogy to the Pirque 'Abh'oth to which Dr Burney has drawn attention. There we have direct evidence that the Jews were interested in the teachings of the Fathers, but scarcely cared at all for the details of their lives. It seems to me that the new *Sayings* afford considerable indirect support to the view that behind our Gospels lie two kinds of record, one based on the Jewish plan, which gave *Sayings* without a

completer historical framework, and the other probably due to the desire for more historical information, which certainly must have arisen very soon especially in Gentile circles. The Gospel of St Mark would seem to belong to the latter class. Grenfell and Hunt's *Sayings* may be the descendants of the former, and *the Logoa* of Matthew may belong to the same category, while St Luke's Gospel may be regarded as an attempt to satisfy Theophilus' desire to understand the origin of the saying on which his instruction as a catechumen had been based, by giving him a Gospel which joined the *Sayings* in their earliest form to as much historical background as could be found.

The Gospel according to the Hebrews

Walter F. Adeney, 1904

This mysterious work – the mere wreckage of which is all that has been washed up on the shores of our late times – hovers before the imagination of New Testament scholars like a phantom ship, intangible, indeterminate. Periodically the ghostly book reappears in criticism only to be discredited as again it glides away into obscurity. In the discussion of its merits the tables are turned – heresy believes and orthodoxy doubts. A skeptical orthodoxy brings a charge of unwarrantable licence in championing its claims on credulous heresy. At the dawn of the scientific method in criticism, its founder, Lessing, approaching the subject from the standpoint of general literature, propounded the idea that the Gospel according to the Hebrews was the primary source of our Synoptics (A.D. 1778). Stimulated by that great writer's exciting suggestion, Eichhorn, a specialist in the subject, early in the nineteenth century worked out in detail the conception that some Syro-Chaldaic work was the original composition at the root of our first three gospels, and then the discussion drifted into wider fields, and the identity of the hypothetical source with the traditional Gospel according to the Hebrews was variously regarded. Discussing the subject in the year 1866, Hilgenfeld declared triumphantly, "At length the Gospel according to the Hebrews offers those of us who are investigating the origin of the gospels the *punctum Archimedis* which so many learned men have vainly sought in the Gospel according to Mark. Pfleiderer is more cautious; but he finds one of the sources of Matthew in a strongly Jewish work of primitive Christianity, adding "that this source was the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is also often cited elsewhere, is probable (*wahrscheinlich*), though nothing can be affirmed of it with certainty." More recently Harnack has assigned the origin of the Hebrew's gospel to the period 65 (70) to 100 A.D., holding that it probably belongs to the beginning of this period. Inasmuch as he gives 70 to 75 as the probable date of Matthew, and 78 to 93 as the probable date of Luke and Acts, evidently he is inclined to set the Hebrew's gospel earlier than both these Synoptics, and of course much earlier than John, while it may be no later than Mark, the first written canonical gospel, which he assigns to 65 to 70 A.D. And now we have the latest critical life of Christ, written by Oscar Holtzmann, an elaborate work of great learning, acuteness of observation, and freshness of thought, which challenges the attention of students as one of the important contributions to the subject, claiming that the Gospel according to the Hebrews as a primary authority – as far as its fragments go – parallel in historical worth to the Synoptics, and even in some respects to be preferred to them, while our Forth Gospel is almost wholly relegated to the realm of legend. Among English writers the tendency has been

to discredit the work as a late product, a secondary gospel, based on one or more of our New Testament gospels – Matthew in particular – the view, for example, maintained by Lightfoot, Westcott, and Salmon. But in the year 1879 Mr. Nicholson, Principle Librarian and Superintendent of the London Institution, published an exhaustive study on the subject, in which he endeavored to vindicate the antiquity and independence of the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

The high historical value recently set on this Gospel by scholars and critics brings it again into the light, and demands a searching examination of its claims. I do not profess to offer here any such complete treatment of the subject. But some of the most significant points may be indicated within reasonable limits of space.

First, let us summarize the principle known facts concerning the gospel. Our fullest information comes from Jerome. He writes of “the Gospel belonging to (*juxta*) the Hebrews which the Nazarenes use to this day; according to (*secundum*) the Apostles, or as most (*plerique* – perhaps meaning “many”) assert belonging to (*juxta*) Matthew. This gospel, then, was existing in the days of Jerome as a scriptural document, read in the churches of Jewish Christians known as Nazarenes. Jerome suggests that his own opinion was that it should be ascribed to the Apostles, though he admits as an alternative adopted by many, if not by the majority of his contemporaries, that it should be assigned to Matthew. Jerome has many references to this gospel, and seven times he tells us that it was largely attributed to Matthew, especially by Jewish Christians. In one very important passage he informs us that he had himself seen the book and copied it. His statement is as follows –

Matthew, who also is Levi, and who from a tax-gatherer came to be an Apostle, first of all the Evangelists composed a gospel of Christ in Judaea in the Hebrew language and characters, for the benefit of those of the circumcision who had believed: who translated it into Greek is not sufficiently ascertained. Furthermore, the Hebrew itself is preserved in the library at Caesarea which the martyr Pamphilus so diligently collected. I also was allowed by the Nazarenes who use this volume in the Syrian city of Beroea to copy it,” etc.

In another place Jerome writes of “the Gospel which is called according to the Hebrews (*secundum Hebraeos*), and was lately translated by me into the Greek language and the Latin, which also Origin (*Adamantius*, the church name Origen often uses.”)

Again he says that it was written in the “Chaldee and Syriac (*i.e.* Aramaic) language but in Hebrew letters. Here, then, we have an exact, unmistakable description of the literary form of the work. It was in the Aramaic dialect, but written in Hebrew characters. In this form Jerome found it at Caesarea. And again at Beroea, when he was allowed to copy it. Subsequently he translated it into Greek and Latin. Much discussion has arisen on the sub-

ject of Jerome's translation. But two points seem to be clear, in spite of all the uncertainty that surrounds the whole question. First, this Aramaic work could not have been the original of our Greek Matthew, for in that case Jerome would not have had occasion to translate it, since our Matthew in Greek was familiar to him as part of his New Testament. Second, in spite of the fact that Jerome made his translation, it seems to be demonstrated by Harnack that the Gospel according to the Hebrews had been translated into Greek long before this – as early as the latter part of the second century A.D. The reference to it in Eusebius, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria prove this. The only explanation of Jerome's action is that he had not met with the translation which perhaps was chiefly used in Egypt, while his researches were carried out in Palestine and Syria, where the original Aramaic text was in use among the Jewish churches.

Tracing the references to the gospel further back we have an important witness in Eusebius, the most learned and fair-minded Christian scholar at the beginning of the fourth century. After giving his list of new Testament books, the Father of Church History adds, "Some moreover have also counted in this class (*i.e.* the class of universally acknowledged books) the Gospel according to the Hebrews, in which especially those Hebrews who have received the Christ rejoice. Now all these" (*i.e.* some books just mentioned and also our Gospel according to the Hebrews) "will belong to the disputed books." These are books in Eusebius' second list, accepted by some, rejected by others. Here he would place the Hebrew Gospel, but only after stating in his candid way that some would go further and reckon it to be of undisputed canonicity. A little later, referring to those Ebionites who did not reject the divinity of Christ, he says, "using that gospel alone which is called the Gospel according to the Hebrews, they took no small account of the rest." We have already seen how Jerome stated that Origen used the Gospel according to the Hebrews. One or two of his references to this work have been preserved. Thus before quoting the most difficult passage of the gospel that has come down to us – which we shall have to discuss a little later – he writes, "But if anyone admits the Gospel according to the Hebrews, where the Savior Himself says," etc. Here the use of the indicative *admits* shows that Origen knew of people who accepted this gospel as authoritative. In another place, where we only have the Latin version of Origen's work, we read, "It is written in a certain gospel which is called 'according to the Hebrews,' where the technical phrase it is written" points to a citation from recognized scripture. But Origen (in this Latin version) adds, "If, however, anyone is pleased to take that as now authoritative," etc., showing that there were doubts on the position to be assigned to the gospel. Going a step further back to Origen's predecessor, Clement of Alexandria, we come upon a quotation from this gospel in Greek, introduced by the technical formula for scripture: "Just as in the Gospel according to the Hebrews it is written," etc. This is the earliest

known citation from the Gospel according to the Hebrews by name. But we have several earlier references to the book, and one probable citation from it, though there the book is not mentioned. Irenaeus tells us in two places that the Ebionites only used the Gospel according to Matthew. It is generally assumed that Irenaeus here means our Matthew, and indeed, since we know he used that book and attached a unique value to the four gospels of which it is the first, it is difficult to come to any other conclusion on the subject. Nevertheless we have seen from what Jerome, our chief authority, said, that the book used by the Jewish Christians of his day was not our Matthew, but the Gospel according to the Hebrews in Aramaic, which they, in common with many others, ascribed to Matthew. Now the Ebionites of whom Irenaeus wrote were the Jewish Christians of his day. It is not to be supposed that after using the Greek canonical Matthew in the second century these people had discarded it in favor of an Aramaic book by the end of the third century. The tendency would rather be the other way. Nor can we get any assistance from the fact that, while Irenaeus called the Jewish Christian Ebionites, Jerome called them Nazarenes, for if these are not two names for the same people, the Ebionites must be regarded as the more heretical, rejecting fundamental doctrine of orthodoxy, were nearer to the Catholic Church. It cannot be supposed that the heretical Ebionites accepted our Matthew in Greek, but the more orthodox Nazarenes used a different and more Jewish gospel. Accordingly, Mr Nicholson concludes that Irenaeus was referring to the Gospel according to the Hebrews when he wrote of the gospel used by the Ebionites, and consequently held this to be Matthew's work. But since he accepted our Matthew as the genuinely apostolic gospel, that would only be possible on condition that he held the Gospel according to the Hebrews to have been the Hebrew or Aramaic original of our Matthew. This, we see, even Jerome seemed to allow. The simpler explanation of the case is that Irenaeus had never seen the Gospel according to the Hebrews. There is no evidence that it had reached Western Europe when Irenaeus lived. All our references to it are found in the East— Palestine, Syria, Egypt. Hearing that the Ebionites used a gospel, Irenaeus would naturally conclude that this was the Matthew gospel which he knew, while in point of fact it was another gospel which the Jewish Christians ascribed to the publican Apostle. A comparison with Hippolytus shows us that Irenaeus is capable of much greater errors than this in his often hearsay descriptions of heretics. The conclusion we come to therefore is, that Irenaeus is no authority for ascribing the Gospel according to the Hebrews to Matthew, but that he does give us evidence for believing that in his day Jewish Christians used a gospel which they ascribed to Matthew; and then, combining this information with that afforded two centuries later by Jerome, for concluding that gospel to have been no other than the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

Eusebius gives us two earlier references to this Gospel of an indirect character, but still

unmistakable. The first is in Hegesippus, a Jewish Christian writer, but of the Catholic Church, not an Ebionite, whom Harnack dates to 150 A.D. "He also," says Eusebius, "adduces something out of the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Syriac, and particularly out of the Hebrew language." The passage is confused; probably the text is corrupt. But whatever may have been its original phrasing, plainly it asserts that Hegesippus quoted this gospel in a Syriac or Hebrew form – possibly meaning, what Jerome told us, that it was in the Syriac language, but in Hebrew letters. Now I am induced to think that the author of *Supernatural Religion* is correct when he argues that we have no evidence showing that Hegesippus used any other gospel. Nevertheless, seeing that we have but a very few fragments of Hegesippus, Dr Lightfoot was also plainly right in his triumphant refutation of the two assumptions, built on this fact by the author of *Supernatural Religion*, first that Hegesippus never quoted any of our gospels, and second, that he did not even know of their existence. For our present purpose, however, that controversy is beside the mark. What we have to take note of here is, that so early a writer as Hegesippus made use of the Gospel according to the Hebrews as an authoritative document.

The other indirect early reference to this gospel preserved by Eusebius is a statement concerning Papias, who cannot be dated later than A.D. 160, and perhaps wrote much earlier. The Church historian, after mentioning various things recorded by Papias, adds, "and he has published also another relation of a woman accused of many sins before the Lord, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains. We cannot be certain, on the grounds of this remark, that Papias used the Hebrew gospel. All that Eusebius tells us is, that he gives a story that is contained in it. He may have obtained this story by tradition from the elders, whose information he elsewhere informs us he valued very highly. Still there is some degree of probability that he used the book and there we must be content to let the matter rest.

There is yet one earlier indication of the use of the Gospel according to the Hebrews in the church of the second century. In the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans we read, "For I know and believe that He was in the flesh even after the resurrection; and when He came to Peter and his company, He said to them, *Lay hold and handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal daemon.*"

Now Jerome quotes the expression *incorporeal daemon*, and ascribes it to the gospel used by the Nazarennes, saying, "For when the Apostles thought Him a spirit, or, according to the gospel the Nazarennes of the Hebrews use, a *daemon* without a body," etc.

Then we have the fuller expression in Origen, who, while discussing the term "incorporeal," writes, "And if anyone should quote it to us out of the little treatise entitled The Teach-

ing of Peter, in which the Savior seems to say to His disciples ‘I am not an incorporeal *daemon*’ I have to reply, in the first place, that that work is not included in the Ecclesiastical Books.” These references leave with us the suggestion that the curious expression was to be found in “The Teaching of Peter” as well as in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, possibly taken by the one work from the other. There must be some doubt, therefore, as to the question in which book Ignatius found the saying, if indeed, he derived it from either of them. Farther back than this we cannot find any traces of the gospel. But neither do the early patristic writings contain certain references to any of the canonical gospels before the time of Ignatius; the possible allusions to one or more of them in the apostolic fathers are too indefinite to be cited as evidence. Accordingly, it may be admitted that the external evidence for the Gospel according to the Hebrews is nearly if not quite as ancient as that for the New Testament Synoptics, though very much less abundant.

But our assurance concerning the genuineness and reliability of the Synoptic gospels is by no means confined to the results of patristic inquiries. It rests much more on the self-evidencing character of the books themselves. If, therefore, the Gospel according to the Hebrews is to be brought into line with those gospels, as some contend – not to speak of the idea of giving it priority of authority – it must stand this test. Here we have to discriminate between two questions that are not at all conterminous – the question of antiquity and the question of authority. It would be quite possible to allow greater antiquity for the gospel according to the Hebrews, and yet to judge it less reliable than the gospels, which, on this hypothesis, came later. St Luke, in his preface, treats his predecessors with scant courtesy. Suppose we grant the first contention of its champions, that the Gospel according to the Hebrews was among those predecessors, we may still be justified in giving it an inferior historical value if it affords evidence of being based on uncertain information, inaccurately reported, received with indiscriminating credulity, or warped by prejudice. How do the fragments that we possess help us in settling this point? Let us examine the more suggestive of them in order to see whether they furnish materials for an answer to the question.

Taking these fragments in the order of the gospel history, and passing over two which are almost identical with our Matthew, we come upon this remarkable extract preserved by Jerome: –

Behold the mother of the Lord and his brothers said to Him, John the Baptist is baptizing for the remission of sins: let us go and be baptized by him. But He said to them: What have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? unless perhaps just this that I said is ignorance.

Now Oscar Holtzmann maintains that such a saying would never have been admitted into a gospel if it had not proceeded from the lips of Jesus Himself, since in all subsequent

times it was reckoned a sin to doubt the sinlessness of Jesus. He attributes the idea of the sinlessness of Christ to the Apostle Paul, and he thinks he finds a different opinion expressed by our Lord Himself in two passages (Mark x. 18 and xiv. 36). This is not the place to discuss the great subject of the sinlessness of Jesus. Still it may be remarked that to base a theory on questionable inferences derived from the two passages given, to the neglect of all the gospel testimony to the contrary, is not scientific, especially since an examination of those passages shows that the interpretation of them assumed by Hotzmann is far from being warranted. The first admits of various interpretations; the second is not usually regarded as indicative of more than the limitation and weakness natural to human life. To take our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane as a sign that He confessed Himself to be not sinless is to read a strange meaning into it. This passage from the Gospel according to the Hebrews stands absolutely alone in containing a definite confession of conceivable faultiness assigned to Jesus Christ. It is possible to accept it as historical without contradicting the idea of the perfect sinlessness of Jesus which runs through the whole New Testament, if we suppose the word 'sin' to be used here for a technical breach of the letter of the law, apart from moral evil, as it might well be understood in a strict Jewish household. Indeed, it would seem to be this that was intended by the word 'ignorance.' We can hardly imagine how even an absolutely innocent child could have been brought up without ever transgressing unknown rules. This impossibility was recognized by the rabbis when they fixed the age of thirteen as the period of life at which a boy was to be required to keep the Torah. It may be allowed that, spoken in this sense, the saying might have fallen from the lips of Jesus. It is not safe to say that is certainly not genuine. All the same, the whole conversation has the legendary air of the apocryphal gospels, with their love of personal detail. Though of most doubtful origin, it is probably very ancient; we cannot well imagine such a tradition creeping into a gospel in the later period, when anything even apparently derogatory to our Lord would have been resented as much as by the Jewish Christian as by the Catholic Church.

The next fragment refers to occurrences at our Lord's baptism. For this, too, we are indebted to Jerome. It is as follows: –

It came to pass that when the Lord had come up from the water, the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit descended and rested on Him, and said to Him: My son in all the prophets I waited for Thee, that I might come and rest on Thee; for Thou art my rest, Thou art my firstborn Son who reignest for ever.

This passage contains several peculiarities: (1) Jesus is called "the Lord" (*dominus*), a characteristic of later usage. (2) The simpler conception of the Holy Spirit which we meet with in the canonical gospels is enlarged to "the whole fountain of the Holy Spirit." (3) Jesus is addressed by the Holy Spirit as "Son." (4) The reference to the prophets suggests the age

of reflection, when prophecy was recognized as fulfilled in Christ. (5) The description of Jesus as God's 'firstborn Son' is not met with in any of the four gospels; in the New Testament it does not appear till late in the development of apostolic teaching. All these five points indicate a later age than the Synoptics.

But the most remarkable quotation from the Gospel according to the Hebrews which we possess is that which refers to the temptation. It is found twice in Origen, in the first place directly ascribed to this gospel, and the first part of it three times in Jerome. In this passage Jesus is represented as saying, "My mother the Holy Ghost lately took me by one of my hairs and carried me to the great mountain Tabor." Oscar Holtzmann thinks that this remarkable saying is probably genuine, and represents an older account of the temptation than anything we have on the subject in the gospels. His reason for coming to this extraordinary conclusion are, that here the incident is given in words ascribed to Jesus Himself, and since it must have first been narrated by Him, this fact points to priority; and further that Mount Tabor, being visible from Nazareth or its vicinity, the idea of the temptation being connected to that place points to our Lord's residence at Nazareth. The temptation is approached from Nazareth. Even the strange reference to the mode of carrying, he points out, might be suggested by Old Testament precedents. But surely the whole passage is obviously apocryphal. There is nothing at all approaching it in any other of our Lord's recorded sayings. It would be difficult to compress more improbabilities into a single sentence. (1) Jesus nowhere else speaks of the Holy Spirit as his mother. In the light of this passage we must understand the passage just previously discussed concerning the baptism to mean that there also the Holy Spirit as Christ's mother addressed Him as her firstborn son! The idea is accounted for by the fact that the Aramaic word for spirit is feminine, but such a grammatical inference is more in the style of the later times when gnostic fancies were afloat, than the simple matter-of-fact manner of the primitive gospels, or our Lord's way of speaking about Himself. (2) The fantastic description of the manner in which Jesus is here supposed to speak of the Holy Spirit conveying Him to the scene of the temptation is scarcely less incongruous. It is not to be denied that Jesus commonly talked in figurative language, spoke of a fig-tree, or the Mount of Olives, or Mount Hermon, being transported by the sea of faith, promised His disciples immunity if they trod on snakes and scorpions, declared that they should forthwith see angels ascending and descending on Him. But in all such cases the metaphorical character of his utterances is apparent. Here however the way in which Mount Tabor is introduced excludes the idea of anything but a physical transportation through the air. It may be urged that in the second temptation a very similar situation is created when we are told that the devil set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, as well as on a high mountain. But these things are stated in the course of the temptation., and they have not the most peculiar features of the narrative in the

Gospel according to the Hebrews. Oscar Holtzman thinks that Jesus may be using figurative language, based on Apocryphal and Old Testament analogies. It is much more likely that those analogies gave rise to the myth in Jewish Christian circles. Ezekiel says that the hand of the Lord God fell upon him, and adds, "he put forth the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem," etc. Here not only is the same curious mode of carrying described but it is also ascribed to "the spirit." In *Bel and the Dragon* we read concerning Habbakuk. "Then the angel of the Lord took him by the crown, and lifted him up by the hair of his head, and with the blast of his breath set him in Babylon over the den." It seems plain that our gospel fragment must have been inspired by one or the other, or perhaps both, of these earlier passages. The prophet, it should be observed, unlike the Hebrew evangelist, is careful to indicate the fact that he is writing figuratively by inserting the saving clause "in the visions of God," before mentioning so realistic a destination of his aerial voyage as the city of Jerusalem. (3) Mount Tabor would have been an absolutely site for the scene of the temptation, because there was a Roman fortress with a garrison of soldiers there in the time of Christ. For the same reason, as well as on other grounds, the tradition that fixed on this conspicuous round hill in the plain of Jezreel as the Mount of Transfiguration is equally erroneous. But the twofold selection of the same hill is not without significance, for it shows that the fancy of early Christian times was readily attracted to it, perhaps simply because of its peculiar situation. For this reason it was singled out in the Old Testament for special notice, as by the Psalmist who wrote,

The north and the south, thou hast created them:
Tabor and Hermon rejoice in thy name.

And again by Jeremiah, where he writes, "As I live saith the King, whose name is the Lord of Hosts, surely like Tabor among the mountains, and like Carmel by the sea, so shall he come." In other words, the appearance of Tabor in the Gospel according to the Hebrews is literary, not historical; it is due to reminiscences of Scripture, not to observation of contemporary conditions; therefore it is just not such a reference to the mountain as would be made by a resident at Nazareth in sight of the fortress – as Oscar Holtzmann supposes – but, on the contrary, the kind of reference that would come to a writer at a distance, to whom Tabor was merely a Bible mountain, known to him by the Scripture passages concerning it.

When we put all these considerations together, can we suppose that this grotesque statement in the Gospel according to the Hebrews is to be accepted as of even higher historical value than the account of the temptation in the Synoptic gospels? Surely the more we look into it, the more shall we find the obvious impression of its legendary character confirmed. .

Proceeding further, we have Jerome pointing out that in its version of the Lord's prayer this gospel has the Hebrew word *Machar*, meaning "of the morrow," where we read "daily" in the phrase "our daily bread," a rendering now widely accepted as a translation of the Greek of our gospels, so that in concurrence of the Hebrew gospel here is of peculiar interest. Whatever may be its historical value, at all events it affords a most ancient comment on a difficult passage, and very likely it gives us the very word used by our Lord.

This gospel also adds an interesting bit of information about the man with the withered hand, stating that he said, "I am a mason, seeking my living by my hands; I pray thee Jesus, to restore my health, lest I shamefully beg my food." The passage has been described as obviously a late gloss. Can we be sure of this? There is nothing inherently improbable in it, and the simplest appellation "Jesus" speaks for its antiquity and genuineness. A late writer, not adhering to a true tradition, would certainly have written "Lord" or "Teacher," in the usual style of the gospels.

Here is an interesting version of our Lord's teaching about forgiveness, taken from the Gospel according to the Hebrews: "If thy brother sin in word and make satisfaction to you seven times a day accept him. Simon, his disciple, said to him, 'Seven times a day!' The Lord answered and said to him, 'Yea, I tell thee, up to seven times seven; for in the prophets also, after they have been anointed by the Holy Spirit, the word of sin is found.'"

This has affinities with both Matthew and with Luke. It is Matthew only who gives us the "seventy times seven," but Luke only mentions "the day." The final clause about the prophets is not in either of those gospels, but there is not anything extravagant or unlikely in it. It may be the comment of some later teacher, or the writer of the gospel. But there is nothing to forbid us to accept it as a genuine saying of our Lord.

Origen has preserved a longer extract from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, containing an incident of the rich young ruler, which varies considerably from all the Synoptic accounts. We have this in the Old Latin version only. It is as follows: –

Another of the rich men said to Him, Master, what good thing shall I do that I may live? He said to him, Man, do the law and the prophets. He answered Him, I have done it. He said to him, Go sell all thou possesseth and divide it among the poor, and come follow me. But the rich man began to scratch his head, and it did not please him. And the Master said to him: How do you say, I have done the law and the prophets? since it is written in the law, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself and behold many of thy brothers, sons of Abraham, are covered with filth, dying of hunger, and your house is full of many good things, and nothing at all goes out of it to them. And turning to Simon, he said, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go into the kingdom of heaven.

The crudity of this passage has often been pointed to as a sign of its late and untrustworthy character. But is this just? Does it not rather suggest the primitive nature of the narrative? If the Gospel according to the Hebrews contained much writing of this sort we can understand how the main body of the Church refused to use the book even if it were as old as the Synoptics, since the latter works are better in tone and style. Still there are features of the paragraph that point to a possible derivation in part from our gospels, rather than priority to them and absolute independence. The description of the poor and the rich man's neglect of them reads like an echo of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke; but the question, "What good thing shall I do?" and the expression, "the kingdom of heaven" with which the extract closes points to Matthew, the only New Testament book in which either occurs. It might appear, therefore, that we have here a conflation of Matthew's account of the young man who came to Christ with the parable in Luke. But even if that be allowed, we have also a good deal that is found in none of the gospels. This may be set down to later imagination working over the story. But there is nothing to prevent us from attributing it to a genuine tradition.

Jerome has an extract from the Gospel according to the Hebrews, describing what happened at the temple when Jesus died, where we read that "the lintel of the temple, of infinite size, was broken and divided"; and again, Jerome says that we read in this gospel, not that "the veil of the temple was torn," but that "the lintel of the temple, of wonderful size, fell down." This variation cannot be traced to anything in the gospels, unless it might be regarded as a legendary modification of the Synoptic narrative based on Mark xiii. 2. It may be thought that the typical significance of the rendering of the veil of the temple, opening up the secluded inner sanctuary to public view, would lead to the tradition in our Synoptics being made more welcome in Gentile churches, while the alternative tradition in the Gospel according to the Hebrews, not containing the significant suggestion, would be more acceptable to Jewish Christians.

Jerome has preserved a remarkable extract from this gospel about an appearance of the risen Christ to James the brother of the Lord, which has become well known to all students of early Christian times, It is as follows: –

But when the Lord had given his shroud to the priest's servant, he went to James and appeared to him; for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour when he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen from the sleeping ones.

This passage cannot be traced to anything in the Synoptics, although perhaps the latter part of it might be regarded as founded on Luke xxiv. 41-48. But the resemblance is very slight. In our third gospel, it is broiled fish that is brought. Jesus eats it Himself and His

reason for doing so is to demonstrate that He is not merely a spirit. In the Hebrew gospel the case is entirely different. Bread is brought; James, not Jesus, is to eat; and the reason for doing so is his release from his oath. The story, since it concerns James, may be said to be a legendary gloss on St Paul's bare, brief assertion, "Then he appeared to James." [Cor. xv. 7.] Still, as the story stands, it must be understood to be independent of the New Testament. Can we regard it as an ancient and reliable tradition? In attempting to answer this question the following points should be noted: –

1. The prominence given to James, the head of the Jewish Church, is a gospel written for Hebrew Christians, may be regarded as a set-off against the prominence of Peter in the other gospels. They contain the Petrine tradition (Mark being the interpreter of Peter). The Gospel according to the Hebrews may contain the Jacobean tradition, and each perhaps may be historically valid. Still we cannot but suspect a 'tendency,' a certain bias, in this prominence of James.

2. It would seem from this extract that Jesus made His first appearance to James. But our earliest and best authenticated account of the appearances of the risen Christ, given by St Paul, puts the appearance to Cephas first, and that to James in fourth place.

3. The reference to the shroud looks apocryphal.

4. So does the reference to the priest's servant. Is this suggest by Mark xiv. 47? Or may we suppose that the incident in the garden actually led to the high priest's servant to become a follower of Jesus Christ? It is significant that in John (xviii. 10.) The man's name is given. Why is this, except that he was of some interest to the church in later times?

5. James' presence at the Lord's Supper does not agree with any of our four gospel accounts. It implies that he was a close follower of Jesus, if not an apostle. This is rather like a reflection from his later importance to the church. But there is some question as to what drinking the cup of the Lord may mean here. May it be an allusion to that cup of which Jesus spoke to James and his brother John on an earlier occasion, the cup of Christ's sufferings? If so, in the passage before us the idea must be that the agony of James suffered when Jesus was crucified was his drinking of the Lord's bitter cup.

6. For the same reason his oath, which represents his having more faith in the resurrection and more self-abandoning devotion to Christ than any of the Twelve, strikes us as apocryphal.

7. The description of Jesus as the Lord indicates here, as elsewhere in this gospel, a later time than Mark; on the other hand, the expression "the Son of Man," occurring at the end of the same passage, is quite in the primitive gospel style.

Origen supports Jerome in another extract, where Jesus after his resurrection appears, saying, "I am not an incorporeal spirit." The extract in Jerome is larger, running as follows: 'Behold, touch me and see, for I am not an incorporeal spirit. And immediately they touched him and believed.' This reads very much like an echo of Luke xxiv. 36-43, where, however, there is no reference to touching; the latter idea suggest incidents of the Magdalen and Thomas in John (xx. 17, 25, 27).

There is a fine statement of the Gospel according to the Hebrews preserved by Jerome according to which this gospel put among the greatest offenders the man who "saddened his brother's spirit." Similar is another saying from the same gospel, ascribed to the Lord, "Never be glad except when you look upon your brother with charity.:" This beautiful utterance almost guarantees its accuracy; it is so completely characteristic of the Lord, and so foreign to the temper of the Church in later times.

And now what conclusion are we to draw from the data as to the independence and authoritativeness of the gospel?

Surely at least a measure of independence must be conceded. Several of the fragments we have examined are not capable of being traced back to any of the canonical gospels. Some of these fragments bear on the face of them an inherent probability, while others are manifestly apocryphal. Taking them as a whole, we must confess that they contain a disproportionate amount of difficult statements when compared with our more sober canonical gospels. Therefore, even if we granted complete independence to this mysterious work, we should be compelled to relegating it to the secondary position those various attempts at writing a life of Christ, of which St Luke refers somewhat disparagingly in the preface of his gospel. Not only is it not always written in the best taste, but it displays dangerous credulity in accepting improbable legends. Then some of the less reliable fragments, as we have seen, appear to point to a date later than our Synoptics – Matthew and Luke in particular – finds its solution most easily in the conclusion that those works were known to its author. It would seem then, as a result of analysis, that the source of the work are of three kinds: (1) genuine traditions, not preserved in any of the canonical gospels; (2) unreliable legends, also not found in those gospels; (3) passages from two or more of those gospels which have been worked over by the author of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, in the light of his own independent materials. If these are just conclusions, we cannot allow the gospel the position of authority by the side of the Synoptics, sometimes in preference to them, and always in preference to the fourth gospel, claimed for it by Oscar Holtzmann. On the other hand, we must conclude the almost scornful treatment of it by Dr Salmon and other conservative scholars is not just. The book must be very ancient, almost contemporary with the Synoptics, and

it contains some fragments of historical tradition and teachings of Jesus, the neglect of which is unwarrantable. Still more unjust is it to treat this gospel as a heretical work, wilfully perverting the true Christian tradition of Christian origins. Assuredly it is honestly written; and there is no reason to doubt the good faith of its author.

The following selection is excerpted from Ron Cameron in *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), pp. 85-86. Philipp Vielhauer and George Ogg made the original translation in *New Testament Apocrypha*.

It is written in the Gospel of the Hebrews:

When Christ wished to come upon the earth to men, the good Father summoned a mighty power in heaven, which was called Michael, and entrusted Christ to the care thereof. And the power came into the world and it was called Mary, and Christ was in her womb seven months. (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Discourse on Mary Theotokos* 12a)

According to the Gospel written in the Hebrew speech, which the Nazaraeans read, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit shall descend upon him. . . Further in the Gospel which we have just mentioned we find the following written:

And it came to pass when the Lord was come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended upon him and rested on him and said to him: My son, in all the prophets was I waiting for thee that thou shouldest come and I might rest in thee. For thou art my rest; thou art my first-begotten Son that reignest for ever.

(Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah* 4 [on Isaiah 11:2])

And if any accept the Gospel of the Hebrews - here the Savior says:

Even so did my mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of my hairs and carry me away on to the great mountain Tabor. (Origen, *Commentary on John* 2.12.87 [on John 1:3])

As also it stands written in the Gospel of the Hebrews:

He that marvels shall reign, and he that has reigned shall rest. (Clement, *Stromateis* 2.9.45.5)

To those words (from Plato, *Timaeus* 90) this is equivalent:

He that seeks will not rest until he finds; and he that has found shall marvel; and he that has marvelled shall reign; and he that has reigned shall rest. (Ibid., 5.14.96.3)

As we have read in the Hebrew Gospel, the Lord says to his disciples:
And never be ye joyful, save when ye behold your brother with love.

(Jerome, *Commentary on Ephesians* 3 [on Ephesians 5:4])

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which the Nazaraeans are wont to read, there is counted among the most grievous offences:

He that has grieved the spirit of his brother. (Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 6 [on Ezekiel 18:7])

The Gospel called according to the Hebrews which was recently translated by me into Greek and Latin, which Origen frequently uses, records after the resurrection of the Savior:

And when the Lord had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, he went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him risen from among them that sleep. And shortly thereafter the Lord said: Bring a table and bread! And immediately it added: he took the bread, blessed it and brake it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep.

(Jerome, *De viris inlustribus* 2)

The Gospel of the Hebrews

1. Extracts and Commentary

Taken from *Gospel Parallels*,

Ed. Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr.

ISBN 0-8407-5150-8

And

The Other Bible

Ed. Willis Barnstone

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The Gospel of the Nazaraeans ("observers") in Hebrew is believed to have been the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew and the source for the present gospel (which was composed in Greek). There are reliable

witnesses that this gospel was both used and circulated among the earliest followers of Yahshua in the diaspora. Some believe it originated in Egypt, and that the latest possible date it might have been written was during the first half of the second century; however, there are other opinions that it was composed in the middle of the first century, when "Jesus" traditions were first being produced and collected. An earlier date is more likely than a later one. Jerome, Eusebius, and Hegesippus (the latter two not quoting it) make mention of it as do Origen, Clement (both Alexandrians). It is believed to have been known to Papias who died about 130 C.E. and may have quoted it in his lost "Exegesis of the Sayings of the Lord" (which is now "lost"). It is significant to note that Nicephorus, when drawing up his list of canonical and apocryphal books, stated that the Gospel of the Hebrews contained only 2200 lines, 300 fewer than Matthew. It has been suggested that these three hundred lines are the birth narratives of the first and second chapters of our canonical Matthew.

1. The following are the only known extractions from it. Care should be exercised to separate the actual quotations of the extractions from the interpretative remarks made by the church writers. I have placed any corresponding New Covenant verses (taken from the KJV) before each extract. All material underlined, bold-faced, and italicized contains my own emphasis.

Matthew 3:13: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him."

To Matt. 3:13: cf. **Gospel according to the Hebrews**, (in Jerome, *Against Pelagius III.2*)--The mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him, "John the Baptist baptizes for the forgiveness of sins; let us go and be baptized by him." But he said to them, "In what way have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, perhaps, what I have just said is a sin of ignorance."

Commentary:

Within the Torah are different categories of sin; a sin of ignorance is a mis-stepping, or a "side-slip", meaning that in order to learn from one's mistakes he often side-steps to the left or right hand through ignorance, but once he has realized his mistake he then again attempts to step back on the "way" or "path" of righteousness. In the New Covenant this type of sin is often referred to as a "trespass".

Matthew 3:16-17: "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God [Elohim] descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(From *Gospel Parallels*)

To Matt. 3:16-17 cf. **Gospel according to the Hebrews**, (in Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah 11:2*)--When the Lord ascended from the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said to him, "My son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you, that you might come, and that I might rest in you. For you are my rest; and you are my ***firstborn son***, who reigns forever."

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah 4 [on Isaiah 11:2]*)

According to the ***Gospel written in the Hebrew speech***, which the Nazaraeans read, the whole fount

of the Holy Spirit shall descend upon him....Further in the Gospel which we have just mentioned we find the following written: "And it came to pass when the Lord was come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended upon him and rested on him and said to him: My son, in all the prophets was I waiting for you that you should come and I might rest in you. For you are my rest; you are my *firstbegotten Son* that reigns forever.

Commentary:

The earliest followers of Yahshua believed that Yahshua was empowered by the Holy Spirit at his immersion, not at his birth (thus they did not include the later birth narratives in their gospel). The important point in using the word "rest" above is that it refers to the Jewish belief that the Messiah's name will be called "Menachem", or "rest". You will also notice that while our present Matthew does not include the idea of the "firstborn" son (implying that there will be others), they use also the second phrase as quoted in Psalm 2:7 as well: "this day have I begotten thee". You will note that John 1:14 is translated as the "only begotten", but the word "only" there is an addition to the text. It should read "the begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He (the Father) hath declared." The word "begotten" here implies only that he was in the Father's bosom before the creation of the world. In the Hebrew, as used in Zechariah 12:10, the word for "only" is *yachid* meaning "beloved" and implying the "firstborn" son, and as the book of Hebrews states, that Yahvah would use Yahshua, His Firstborn, for "bringing many sons to glory" [Hebrews 2:10] as an "elder brother". Please note that this gospel was written first in Hebrew by the testimony of several of the "church fathers".

Matthew 4:8: "Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."

(From *Gospel Parallels*)

To Matt. 4:8 cf. **Gospel according to the Hebrews** (in Origen, *Commentary on John 2:12* and *Homily on Jeremiah 15:4*)--And if any accept the Gospel of the Hebrews, here the Savior says: "Even so did my mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of my hairs, and carry me to the great Mount Tabor." Jerome also records these words in Latin in his commentaries on Micah 7:6, Isaiah 40:9ff., and Ezekiel 16:13.

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Origen, *Commentary on John 2.12.87 [on John 1:3]*):

And **if any accept the Gospel of the Hebrews** -- here the Savior says: Even so did my mother, the Holy Spirit, take me by one of my hairs and carry me away on to the great mountain Tabor.

Commentary:

Within Judaism, the Shekinah (or "visible" cloud of the Presence) is a feminine word, thought to be Yahvah's feminine aspect; therefore, they called the Spirit the "mother". You will note, likewise, that the Renewed City of Jerusalem that "descends from heaven" is also referred to as female, as the "mother" of us all. Jewish studies have shown that this Heavenly Jerusalem is a "palace of overcomers" (the Overcomer's Palace), and is called by the ancient Jewish kabbalists *Binah* ("Understanding"), a house with "many rooms" (in the New Covenant it is translated "many

mansions"). The verse above follows the motif in the book of Ezekiel where it is stated: "And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem" [Ezekiel 8:3], i.e. to a "holy mountain". Tabor (meaning "mound"; Strong's has broken" or "fragile") was a "very high mountain" located as a landmark within the territories of Issachar and Zebulun, overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon (Greek for Jezreel); and is where Barak gathered his ten thousand men in Deborah's campaign. This is why some believe that "Har Megiddo" or "Armageddon" will be the gathering place of the final battle of the age. While it is entirely possible that this mountain is the one referred to in the book of Revelation, we must realize also that the word "*megiddo*" means "gathering place" and could mean *any* "gathering place". Isaiah refers to the Mount of the Congregation (or the Mountain in Jerusalem) as the Har Moed, the Mountain of Appointment, or "meeting"; and since all Scripture states the "Day of Yahvah" will occur in Jerusalem, we must also consider that Tabor is a "symbolic" term used because of its historical significance as a "gathering place". Note: Origen, an Alexandrian, both quoted from and used the Gospel of the Hebrews. The reason he says "if any accept it" is because many of his colleagues in the west did not.

Matthew 5:23: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee..."

(From *Gospel Parallels*)

To Matt. 5:23 cf. **Gospel according to the Hebrews** (in Jerome *Commentary on Ezekiel 18:7*): And in the **Gospel according to the Hebrews, which the Nazaraeans are accustomed to read**, one of the greatest sins is "To grieve the spirit of one's brother." And, Jerome on Ephesians 5:4 writes: As also we read in the Hebrew Gospel that the Lord spoke to his disciples: "And never," he said, "be joyful except when you look on your brother with love."

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Jerome, *Commentary on Ephesians 3 [on Ephesians 5:4]*):

As we have read in the Hebrew Gospel the Lord says to his disciples: And never be you joyful, save when you behold your brother with love.

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel 6 [on Ezekiel 18:7]*):

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews which the Nazaraeans are wont to read there is counted among the most grievous offenses: He that has grieved the spirit of his brother.

Commentary:

The saying in Matthew 5:23-24 appears to confirm the saying in the Gospel of the Hebrews. Even Jerome seems to agree with the saying in this Gospel about "brotherly love".

Matthew 7:7: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you..."

(From *Gospel Parallels*)

To Matt. 7:7 cf. **Gospel according to the Hebrews** (in Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* V.14.96); also cf. *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 654, Logion 1*: "He who seeks will not give up until he finds; and having found, he will marvel; and having marveled, he will reign; and having reigned, he will rest."

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Clement, *Stromateis* 2.9.45.5)

As also it stands written in the Gospel of the Hebrews: He that marvels shall reign, and he that has reigned shall rest.

Commentary:

I have explained this in other early gospel commentaries. When we seek ardently, we shall find, and when we find, we shall be in awe, and having come to an understanding, we shall be in the "house of understanding", reigning as priests and rulers with Yahshua, our Chief, and that will be our rest.

Matthew 11:29: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

(From *Gospel Parallels*)

To Matt. 11:29 cf. **Gospel according to the Hebrews** (in Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* II.9.45)--He who has marveled shall reign, and he who has reigned shall rest. He who seeks will not give up until he finds; and having found, he will marvel; and having marveled, he will reign, and having reigned he will rest, *Ibid.* V.14.96.

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Clement, *Stromateis* 5.14.96.3)

To those words (from Plato, *Timaeus* 90) this is equivalent: He that seeks will not rest until he finds; and he that has found shall marvel; and he that has marveled shall reign; and he that has reigned shall rest.

Commentary:

Apparently, the editors of these books have chosen to use this verse to identify these sayings (although the previous verse defines it better), the similarity that I find here is the concept of learning from Yahshua to understand and, thus receiving rest.

Luke 24:50-53: "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."

(From *Gospel Parallels*)

Luke 24:50-53 cf. **Gospel according to the Hebrews** (in Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, 2)--Also *the gospel called according to the Hebrews, recently translated by me into Greek and Latin, which Origen often uses*, says, after the resurrection of the Savior: "Now the Lord, when he had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, went to James and appeared to him (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen from among them that sleep)." And a little further on the Lord says, "Bring a table and bread." And immediately it is added, "He took bread and blessed and broke and gave it to James the Just and said to him, "My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep."

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Jerome, *De viris inlustribus* 2):

The *Gospel called according to the Hebrews which was recently translated by me into Greek and Latin, which Origen frequently uses*, records after the resurrection of the Savior: And when the Lord had given the linen cloth to the servant of the priest, he went to James and appeared to him. For James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he should see him risen from among them that sleep. And shortly thereafter the Lord said: Bring a table and bread! And immediately it is added: he took the bread, blessed it and brake it and gave it to James the Just and said to him: My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of man is risen from among them that sleep.

Commentary:

This verses from the KJV above really have little to do with the resurrection narrative in the Gospel of the Hebrews concerning James (Yacov or Jacob). There was a tradition among the early apostles that James, having been present at the Passover meal, did not believe his brother would be raised from the dead, but that Yahshua visited him first after his resurrection. The present gospels seem to evidence the fact that James nor his brothers were followers of Yahshua prior to the execution and resurrection and actually believed that he might be "mad" (see Mark 3:21; Luke 8:19-20; Matthew 12:46-50; John 7:1-9, especially verse 5). At the Feast of Weeks, however, Judas the brother of James, is at least listed among the group of believers (see Acts 1:14). Jude, in his own epistle, claims verifies that he is the same "brother of James" [Jude 1]. Shaul (Paul) in 1 Corinthians 15:7 would seem to provide the evidence that Yahshua did, in fact, visit James after the resurrection but after Cephas and the twelve, then more than five hundred "brethren" who were still alive at the time of Shaul's writing: "After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles". During the beginning of Yahshua's ministry James did not believe Yahshua was the Messiah; however, there was some great catalyst that changed his mind, for he became the leader of the Nazaraean community in Jerusalem and produced our present epistle of James (written before 61 C.E. -- 42 C.E., or earlier, being the most likely date of the writing -- when he was stoned by the Sanhedrin under the authority of Ananus, the son or grandson of Annas who had been responsible for bringing Yahshua to trial; see Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.200) where he makes mention of Yahshua as the Messiah only twice; in verse 1: "James, a servant of Elohim and of the Lord Jesus Christ [Master Yahshua haMashiach], to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting" (he was writing to the "diaspora"); and in James 2:1: "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ [Master Yahshua haMashiach], (the Lord) of glory, with respect of persons." (The words "the Lord" are not in the manuscript). James, as the leader

of the Jerusalem Jewish believers in Yahshua, was apparently a Nazaraean (or Nazir) and "high priest" (Mary was of the lineage of Aaron) and entitled to enter the "Holy of Holies" for which we also have evidence. Eusebius quotes Hegesippus, who states: "This apostle was consecrated from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woollen, but linen garments [i.e. as the priests did]...And indeed, on account of his exceeding great piety, he was called the Just, and Oblias (or Zaddick and Ozleam) which signifies justice and protection of the people. Some of the seven sects [of Judaism], therefore, of the people, mentioned by me above in my Commentaries, asked him what was the door to Jesus? And he answered, 'that he was the Saviour.' From which, some believed that Jesus is the Christ..." [Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book II, Chapter XXIII]. Likewise, he was said to have worn the "crown" or "sacerdotal plate" of the high priest. This has also been interpreted to have been the "ephod"; however, the "plate" was the golden "crown" upon which the letters YHWH were inscribed and placed on the "turban" on top of the forehead.

Other references mentioning the **Gospel of the Hebrews**:

(Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chapter XXIV):

"...yet of all the disciples, Matthew and John are the only ones that have left us recorded comments, and even they, tradition says, undertook it from necessity. Matthew also having first proclaimed the gospel in Hebrew, when on the point of going also to other nations, committed it to writing in his native tongue, and thus supplied the want of his presence to them, by his writings.

(Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, Chapter XXV) in compiling the "canon":

But there are also some who number among these [genuine books], the gospel according to the Hebrews, with which those of the Hebrews that have received Christ are particularly delighted. These may be said to be all concerning which there is any dispute.

(From *The Other Bible*)

(Cyril of Jerusalem, Discourse on Mary Theotokos 12a):

It is written in the **Gospel of the Hebrews**: When Christ wished to come upon the earth to men, the good Father summoned a mighty power in Heaven, which was called Michael, and entrusted Christ to the care thereof. And the power came into the world and it was called Mary, and Christ was in her womb seven months.

Commentary:

This is obviously a heretical and distorted interpretation of the words in the Hebrew gospel to convince the "church" that Mary is the "Mother of God" and a perpetual virgin. This appears to be an interpretation evidencing the Eastern influence on the "church" at the Council of Ephesus (431 C.E.) where she was proclaimed Theotokos, "God-bearer" and "perpetual virgin". "Virgin birth stories (e.g., Hera, Rhea, Silvia, Brigid [also Venus, Aphrodite, among others]) were circulated in other cultures, as were tales of mothers mourning lost and deceased children (e.g., Demeter and Persephone; Isis and Horus [also the story of Tammuz, etc.]). Iconographically, just as Mary was often

portrayed holding or nursing the infant Jesus, so too was the Egyptian goddess Isis depicted suckling her infant son, Horus. Even as Mary was called Queen of Heaven and sometimes depicted surrounded by the zodiac and other symbols, so too were the deities Isis, Magna Mater, and Artemis. Such parallels show that Mary's cult had roots in the cults of the female deities of the Greco-Roman pantheon, cults ultimately eradicated by Christianity" [Bruce Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, p. 500]. The "Jesus Movement" was utilized by Constantine for cult assimilation of the Greco-Roman world into a "one-world government". He succeeded. The "love-feasts" on the eighth day ("Sun-day") commemorating the "Last Supper" (or Pesach) of Yahshua became separated and ritualized in the "church" as the Eucharist, and a hierarchy of governmental "priests" became the harbingers of the Scriptures and the canonizing of the New Covenant, initiating the "Dark Ages" when it was illegal for any common individual to have copies. It was about this time that the "Cult of the Saints" was also spawned. There can be little doubt that the above reflects a perversion of the original Hebrew gospel.

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The Gospel of the Hebrews is known from quotations by Cyril of Jerusalem (*Discourse on Mary Theotokos* 12a), Origen (*Commentary on John* 2.12.87), Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* 2.9.45.5, 5.14.96.3), and Jerome (*Commentary on Isaiah* 4, *Commentary on Ephesians* 3, *Commentary on Ezekiel* 6, *De viris illustribus* 2). These are the only passages that are quoted in Cameron's *The Other Gospels*. pp. 85-86, which follows the translation made by Philipp Vielhauer and George Ogg in *New Testament Apocrypha*.

1. The following selection is excerpted from Montague Rhode James in *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1924), pp. 1-8. There are two things to be noted. First, Cameron believes that the Gospel of the Hebrews may have been independent from the canonical gospels. Thus, most of the references adduced by M.R. James, aside from the ones mentioned above, would be assigned by Cameron to another Jewish-Christian Gospel, most likely the Gospel of the Nazoreans. Second, the "Oxyrhynchus Sayings" are now known to come from the Gospel of Thomas.

The Gospel According to the Hebrews

1. This is on a different level from all the other books we have to deal with. It was a divergent yet not heretical form of our Gospel according to St. Matthew. Even to sketch the controversies which have raged about it is impracticable here. What may be regarded as established is that it existed in either Hebrew or Aramaic, and was used by a Jewish Christian sect who were known as Nazaraeans (Nazarenes), and that it resembled our *Matthew* closely enough to have been regarded as the original Hebrew of that Gospel. I believe few, if any, would now contend that it *was* that original. It is generally, and I believe rightly, looked upon as a secondary document. What was the extent of the

additions to or omissions from *Matthew* we do not know: but two considerations must be mentioned bearing on this: (1) The Stichometry of Nicephorus assigns it 2,200 lines, 300 less than *Matthew*. This figure, if correct, means that a good deal was left out. (2) If the Oxyrhynchus Sayings (see *post*) are really, as competent scholars think, extracts from it, we must suppose a large quantity of additional matter: for we have but two rather brief fragments of that collection of sayings, and eight out of thirteen sayings are either not represented in the canonical text, or differ widely therefrom.

Jerome, who is our chief source of knowledge about this Gospel, says that he had made a Greek and a Latin version of it. The statement is wholly rejected by some, and by others thought to be an exaggeration. It is very difficult to accept it as it stands. Perhaps, as Lagrange suggests, the truth may be that Jerome took notes of the text in Greek and Latin. Schmidtke, it should be added, has tried to show that all Jerome's quotations are borrowed from an earlier writer, Apollonaris; but there is no positive evidence for this.

If the Oxyrhynchus Sayings do come from *Hebrews*, they seem to imply the existence of a Greek version before Jerome's time. This is also implied by the entry in the Stichometry.

I will translate the fragments as they appear in the most recent study on the subject, that of the Rev. Pere Lagrange in the *Revue Biblique*, 1922.

He begins by giving the fragments quoted by Epiphanius from what is properly called the Gospel of the Ebionites. Then he gives those of our Gospel, arranging them in the chronological order of the writers and the works in which they are found. This entails some little repetition, but is otherwise historically interesting, and sound.

Irenaeus *Against Heresies*, i.26.2. But the *Ebionites* use only that Gospel which is according to Matthew, and repudiate the Apostle Paul, calling him an apostate from the Law.

iii.11.7. For the Ebionites, who use only that Gospel which is according to Matthew, are convicted out of that very book as not holding right views about the Lord.

The Ebionites mentioned here are a more primitive sect than those of whom Epiphanius speaks. See below.

Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis* i. 9. 45). Even (*or* also, in the Gospel according to the Hebrews is written *the saying*, 'he that wondereth shall reign, and he that reigneth shall rest'.

id. (*Strom.*) v.14.96. For those words have the same force as these: He shall not cease from seeking until he find, and having found, he will be amazed, and having been amazed will reign, and having reigned will rest.

This is identical with one of the Sayings from Oxyrhynchus: see below.

Origen *on John*, ii. 12. And if any accept the Gospel according to the Hebrews, where the Saviour himself saith, 'Even now did my mother the Holy Spirit take me by one of mine hairs, and carried me away unto the great mountain Thabor', he will be perplexed, &c. . . .

On Jeremiah, homily xv.4. And if anyone receive that *saying*, 'Even now my mother the Holy Spirit took me and carried me up unto the great mountain Thabor', and the rest. . . .

The description of the Holy Spirit as 'my mother' is due to the fact that the Hebrew word for spirit is of the feminine gender. The saying, it is generally thought, refers to the Temptation.

Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* iii.39.17, speaking of the early writer Papias, says: He has also set forth (*or* expounded) another story, about a woman accused of many sins before the Lord, which the

Gospel according to the Hebrews also contains.

It is the obvious, and general, view that this story was that of the woman taken in adultery, which, as is well known, forms no part of the true text of St. John's Gospel, though it is inserted by most manuscripts at the beginning of the eighth chapter. A few manuscripts place it in St. Luke's Gospel. The description suggests that Papias's story, with its mention of *many* sins, differed from ours in detail.

id. iv.22.8. Hegesippus made use in his *Memoirs* of the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

id. iii.25.5 (in his list of *antilegomena*, writings whose canonicity was disputed): And among them some have placed the Gospel according to the Hebrews which is the especial delight of those of the Hebrews who have accepted Christ.

iii.27.4. (The Ebionites repudiated Paul) and used only the Gospel according to the Hebrews, making but slight account of the others.

Theophany, iv.12 (preserved in Syriac). As we have found somewhere in the Gospel which the Jews have in the Hebrew tongue, where it is said: I choose for myself them that are good (*or* well pleasing): the good are they whome my Father which in heaven giveth (*or* hath given) me.

ibid. (A passage preserved in Greek also.) But since the Gospel written in Hebrew characters which has reached our hands turns the threat not against the man who hid *the talent*, but against him who had lived riotously (for it told of three servants, one who deserved his master's substance with harlots and flute-girls, another who multiplied it by trading, and another who hid the talent; and made the one to be accepted, another only rebuked, and another to be shut up in prison), the question occurs to me whether in Matthew, after the conclusion of the speech against the man who did nothing, the threat that follows may refer, not to him, but by *epanalepsis* (i.e. taking up a former subject again) be said of the first, who ate and drank with the drunken.

Epiphanius, *Heresy* xxix.9.4 (Nazoraeans). They have the Gospel according to Matthew quite complete, in Hebrew: for this *Gospel* is certainly still preserved among them as it was first written in Hebrew letters. I do not know if they have even removed the genealogy from Abraham to Christ.

Their Gospel was 'quite complete' as distinguished from the Ebionite-Gospel, which was mutilated.

Stichometry of Nicephorus (of uncertain date, but much older than the ninth-century chronicle to which it is attached).

Antilegomena of the New Testament:

Apocalypse of John, Apocalypse of Peter, Epistle of Barnabas, and Gospel according to the Hebrews, 2,200 lines (300 lines less than the canonical Matthew).

Jerome. He is our principal authority in this matter.

On Ephesians, v. 4. As also we read in the Hebrew Gospel: 'And never, saith he, by ye joyful, save when ye behold your brother with love.'

On Micah vii.6. (The quotation about the Holy Spirit given above under Origen. Jerome quotes it again several times, not always in full.)

Of illustrious men, 2 (on James the Lord's brother).

Also the Gospel according to the Hebrews, lately translated by me into Greek and Latin speech, which Origen often uses, tells, after the resurrection of the Saviour: 'Now the Lord, when he had given the linen cloth unto the servant of the priest, went unto James and appeared to him (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour wherein he had drunk the Lord's cup until he should see him risen again from among them that sleep)', and again after a little, 'Bring ye, saith the Lord, a table and bread', and immediately it is added, 'He took bread and blessed and brake and gave it unto James the Just and said unto him: My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among them that sleep'.

This is a famous passage. One interesting clause is apt to escape notice, about the giving of the shroud to the servant of the (high) priest, which implies that priests must have been apprised of the resurrection as soon as the apostles. Was the servant of the priest Malchus? Presumably the servant was at the sepulchre: if so, it was being guarded by the Jews as well as the Roman soldiers (as in the Gospel of Peter).

ibid. 3. Further, the Hebrew itself (*or* original) is preserved to this day in the library at Caesarea which was collected with such care by the martyr Pamphilus. I also had an opportunity of copying it afforded me by the Nazarenes who use the book, at Beroea, a city of Syria.

This Beroea is Aleppo. In later years Jerome ceased to regard the Hebrew Gospel as the original Matthew.

ibid. 16. Of the Epistle of Ignatius 'to Polycarp' (*really* to Smyrna). In it he also inserts a testimony about the person of Christ, from the Gospel which was lately translated by me; his words are: But I both saw him (*this is wrongly quoted*) in the flesh after the resurrection, and believe that he is *in the flesh*: and when he came to Peter and those who were with Peter, he said to them: Lo, feel me and see that I am not a bodiless spirit (demon). And forthwith they touched him and believed.

Ignatius, to the Smyrnaeans, iii., 1, really says: For I know, and I believe that he is in the flesh even after his resurrection.

Another citation of these words of Christ is given by Origen as from the Doctrine of Peter: see p. 18.

On Matt. ii. Bethlehem of Judaea. This is a mistake of the scribes: for I think it was originally expressed by the Evangelist as we read in the Hebrew, 'of Judah', not Judaea.

On Matt vi.11 (the Lord's Prayer).

In the Gospel according to the Hebrews for 'super-substantial' bread I found *mahar*, which means 'of the morrow', so that the sense is: Our bread of the morrow, that is, of the future, give us this day.

The word supersubstantial is meant to render literally the difficult word *epiousios* which we translate 'daily'.

On Ps. cxxxv. In the Hebrew Gospel according to Matthew it is thus: Our bread of the morrow give us this day; that is, 'the bread which thou wilt give us in thy kingdom, give us this day'.

On Matt. xii. 13. In the Gospel which the Nazarenes and Ebionites use (which I have lately translated into Greek from the Hebrew, and which is called by many (*or* most) people the original of Matthew), this man who had the withered hand is described as a mason, who prays for help in

such words as this: 'I was a mason seeking a livelihood with my hands: I pray thee, Jesus, to restore me mine health, that I may not beg meanly for my food.'

The mention of the Ebionites here is gratuitous. Jerome nowhere speaks of them as using the Gospel, and everything goes to show that, in his time, they did not.

Letter to Damascus (20) on Matt. xxi. 9. Matthew, who wrote his gospel in the Hebrew speech, put it thus: Osanna barrama, i.e., Osanna in the highest.

On Matt. xxiii. 35. In the Gospel which the Nazarenes use, for 'son of Barachias' I find 'of Joiada' written.

This reading avoids an historical difficulty, and is doubtless secondary.

On Matt. xxvii. 16. This *Barabbas*, in the Gospel entitled (written) according to the Hebrews, is interpreted 'son of their master' (teacher).

By 'interpreted,' says Lagrange, it is not meant that the Gospel translated the name, but that it used a form of it which suggested the meaning - Bar-abban.

On Matt. xxvii.51. In the Gospel I so often mention we read that a lintel of the temple of immense size was broken and divided.

Letter to Hedibia (ep. 120) 8. But in the Gospel that is written in Hebrew letters we read, not that the veil of the temple was rent, but that the lintel of the temple of wondrous size fell.

This was probably a change made under the influence of Isa. vi. 4, 'the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried'.

On Isa. xi.2. (The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him) not partially as in the case of other holy men: but, according to the Gospel written in the Hebrew speech, which the Nazarenes read, 'There shall descend upon him the whole fount of the Holy Spirit'. . . In the Gospel I mentioned above, I find this written: And it came to pass when the Lord was come up out of the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said unto him: My son, in all the prophets was I waiting for thee that thou shouldst come, and I might rest in thee. For thou art my rest, and thou art my first begotten son, that reignest for ever.

On Isa. xi. 9, My mother the Holy Spirit.

On Isa., preface to bk. xviii. For when the Apostles thought him to be a spirit, or, in the words of the Gospel which is of the Hebrews, which the Nazarenes are wont to read, 'a bodiless demon', he said to them (Luke xxiv. 38).

On Ezek. xvi.13. My mother, the Holy Spirit.

On Ezek. xviii.7. And in the Gospel according to the Hebrews which the Nazarenes are accustomed to read, it is placed among the greatest sins 'if a man have grieved the spirit of his brother'.

Dialogue against Pelagius, iii.2. In the Gospel according to the Hebrews which is indeed in the

Chaldaean and Syrian speech but is written in Hebrew letters, which the Nazarenes use to this day, *called* 'according to the apostles', or, as most term it, 'according to Matthew', which also is to be seen in the library of Caesarea, the story tells: Behold, the motehr of the Lord and his brethren said unto him: John Baptist baptizeth unto the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized of him. But he said unto them: Wherein (what) have I sinned, that I should go and be baptized of him? unless peradventure this very thing that I have said is a *sin of* ignorance.

ibid. And in the same book: If thy brother (saith he) have sinned by a word and made thee amends, seven times in a day receive thou him. Simon his disciple said unto him: Seven times in a day? The Lord answered and said unto him: Yea, I say unto thee, unto seventy times seven times. For in the prophets also, after they were anointed by the Holy Spirit, the word of sin was found.

'Word of sin' is Hebraistic for 'somewhat of sin': similarly 'sinned by a word' means 'sinned in anything'.

Latin version of Origen on Matthew (now called Pseudo-Origen).

It is written in a certain Gospel which is called according to the Hebrews (if at elast any one care to accept it, not as authoritative, but to throw light on the question before us):

The second of the rich men (*it saith*) said unto him: Master, what good thing can I do and live? He said unto him: O man, fulfil (do) the law and the prophets.

He answered him: I have *kept them*. He said unto him: Go, sell al that thou ownest, and distribute it unto the poor, and come, follow me. But the rich man began to scratch his head, and it pleased him not. And the Lord said unto him: How sayest though: I have kept the law and the prophets? For it is written in the law: Though shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and lo, many of thy brethren, sons of Abraham, are clad in filth, dying for hunger, and thine house is full of many good things, and nought at all goeth out of it unto them.

And he turned and said unto Simon his disciple who was sitting by him: Simon, son of Joanna, it is easier for a camel to enter in by a needle's eye than for a rich man *to enter* into the kingdom of heaven.

It is probable that this extract was found by the translator of Origen's comentary in some work of Jerome. It seems to be agreed that it was not in Origen's own commentary.

Some manuscripts of the Gospels have marginal notes recording readings of 'the Jewish' Gospel, by which our Gospel is evidently meant. Some of these were published by Tischendorf, others more recently by Schmidtke. According to the latter these notes were originally made between 370 and 500 by some one who did his work at Jerusalem.

Matt. iv. 5. The Jewish *copy* has not 'unto the holy city' but 'in Jerusalem'.

Matt. v. 22. The word 'without cause' is not inserted in some copies, nor in the Jewish.

Matt. vii. 5. The Jewish has here: If ye be in my bosom and do not the will of my Father which is in heaven, out of my bosom will I scast you away.

(The 'Second Epistle of Clement', iv. 5, has: The Lord said: If ye be with me gathered together in my bosom and do not my commandments, I will cast you away and say unto you: Depart from me; I know you not whence ye are, ye workers of wickedness.)

Matt. x. 16. The Jewish *has* '(wise) more than serpents' instead of 'as serpents'.

Matt. xi. 12. (The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence.) The Jewish *has*: 'is ravished (*or* plundered).'

Matt. xi. 25. (I thank thee (*lit.* confess unto thee), O Father.) The Jewish: 'I give thee thanks.'

Matt. xii. 40b. The Jewish *has* not: three days and three nights (in the heart of the earth).

Matt. xv. 5. The Jewish: Corban by which ye shall be profited by us.

Probably it is meant that the verse ran: But ye say to your father and mother: Corban, &c.

Matt. xvi. 2, 3. Omitted by 'the Jewish' (as by many extant manuscripts).

Matt. xvi. 17. The Jewish: (Simon) son of John.

Matt. xviii. 22. The Jewish *has*, immediately after the seventy times seven: For in the prophets, after they were anointed with the Holy Spirit, there was found in them a word (matter) of sin.

This shows the identity of 'the Jewish' with Jerome's gospel.

Matt. xxvi. 74. The Jewish: and he denied and swore and cursed.

Matt. xxvii. 65. The Jewish: And he delivered unto them armed men, that they might sit over against the cave and keep it day and night.

A commentary on Isaiah (liii.12) by Haimo of Auxerre (c. 850) has this apropos of the word 'Father forgive them':

For, as is contained in the Gospel of the Nazarenes, at this word of the Lord many thousands of Jews that stood round about the Cross believed.

A marginal note (thirteenth century) on a copy of the versified Bible called the Aurora (by Petrus de Riga), in a manuscript at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (one of a number of remarkable notes) is:

At the cleansing of the Temple:

In the books of the Gospels which the Nazarenes use it is read that rays issued from his eyes whereby they were terrified and put to flight.

Jerome *on Matt.* xxi. 12 says that the people whom Jesus drove out did not resist him: 'For a certain fiery and starry light shone (radiated) from his eyes and the majesty of the Godhead gleamed in his face.'

When I published the note, I took it that it was a reminiscence of Jerome's words: *ray* and *radiate* occur in both. But Dr. Zahn was of opinion that it might really represent something in the old Gospel: so I include it, though with hesitation.

One other mention of this Gospel has to be added.

In Budge's *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts* is a Discourse on Mary by Cyril of Jerusalem. Cyril (Pseudo-Cyril) relates that he had to send for a monk of Maioma of Gaza who was teaching false doctrine. Called on for an account of his belief the monk (p. 637, Eng. trans.) said: It is written in the *Gospel* to the Hebrews that when Christ wished to come upon the earth to men, the good Father called a mighty power in the heavens which was called Michael, and committed Christ to the care thereof. And the power came down into the world and it was called Mary, and *Christ* was in her womb seven months. Afterwards she gave birth to him, and he increased in stature, and he chose the apostles, . . . 'was crucified, and taken up by the Father'. Cyril asked: Where in the Four Gospels is it said that the holy Virgin Mary the mother of god is a force? The monk said: In the *Gospel* to the Hebrews. Then, said Cyril, there are five Gospels? Where is the fifth? The monk said: It is *the Gospel* that was written to the Hebrews. (Cyril convinced him of his error and burned the books. No more is told of the Gospel, which, whatever it may have been, was certainly not the book we have been dealing with, but a writing of pronouncedly heretical (Docetic?) views. The last sentence of the monk's account of Christ, which I did not quote in full just now, is perhaps worth recording.) 'After they had raised him up on the cross, the Father took him up into heaven unto himself.' This, with its omission of all mention of the resurrection, might be construed as heretical: on the other hand, it may be merely a case of extreme compression of the narrative.

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The Gospel According to the Hebrews

1. by Joe Viel

What were the early Christian writers referring to when they talked about the "*Gospel according to the Hebrews*"? In the following I will demonstrate it was a collection of writings accepted as canon by Jewish believers in the Messiah that included:

The **Canonical Gospel of Matthew** we know today (written in Hebrew) but included other works as well.

Possible another work written collectively by the Apostles, called the "*Gospel According to the Apostles*", or this could have been the work of James, and his writing could have been attributed to all 12 of the apostles. Parts or all of this Gospel may have been written in Aramaic.

Possibly another work written by James, which I'll title "the *Gospel of James*" (This work is not extant and probably bears no resemblance to *The Protoevangelist of James* or *The Infancy Gospel of James* but is likely a completely different work altogether than anything that is known to exist.)

It may have contained other works.

PARTS of what was called the "*Gospel according to the Hebrews*" - namely the part written by Matthew - were translated into Greek as what we know today as the "Gospel according to Matthew".

Jerome (340-420 AD) tells us

"Matthew,³⁰ also called Levi, **apostle** and aforesometimes publican, composed a gospel of Messiah **at first published in Judea in Hebrew**³¹ for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was **afterwards translated into Greek** though by what author is uncertain. The Hebrew itself has been preserved until the present day in the library. at Caesarea which Pamphilus so diligently gathered. I have also had the opportunity of having the volume described [*some translators render "copied"*] to me by the Nazarenes³² of Beroea,³³ a city of Syria, **who use it**. In this it is to be noted that wherever the Evangelist, whether on his own account or in the person of our Lord the Saviour quotes the testimony of the Old Testament he does not follow the authority of the translators of the Septuagint but the Hebrew. Wherefore these two forms exist

"Out of Egypt have I called my son,"

and

"for he shall be called a Nazarene."

(Jerome in Lives..., Chapter 3, CCEL translation)

Now it's clear Jerome is talking about the canonical Matthew we know today in that his argument assumes the reader (assumed most like to be a Christian reader) is already familiar with these quotes and is commenting on a familiar passage. He quotes from it to provide evidence of why it was first written in Hebrew, and we know these quotes to come from today's canonical Matthew. We're also told that the Nazarenes use it, so we know it was part of the canon accepted by early Jewish believers in Messiah.

Jerome also attributes canonical Matthew to the APOSTLE/Shaliach Matthew in vs Jovinianus, Book I, 26.

Elsewhere, Jerome says

"In the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is written in the Chaldee and Syrian language, but in Hebrew characters, and is used by the Nazarenes to this day (I mean the Gospel according to the Apostles, or, as is generally maintained, the Gospel according to Matthew, a copy of which is in the library at Caesarea), we find,

Behold, the mother of our Lord and His brethren said to Him, John Baptist baptizes for the remission of sins; let us go and be baptized by him. But He said to them, what sin have I committed that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, haply, the very words which I have said are only ignorance.

(this does not match anything in canonical Matthew and probably comes from the "Gospel of James" or some other part of the "Gospel according to the Hebrews")

And in the same volume,

"If thy brother sin against thee in word, and make amends to thee, receive him

seven times in a day." Simon, His disciple, said to Him, "Seven times in a day?"
The Lord answered and said to him, "I say unto thee until seventy times seven."

(this could be an attempt to describe the basic content of how Jerome remembered canonical Matt 18:21-22 reading in Hebrew/Aramaic to his best memory, also giving some translational levity here, or it could be a quote from the Gospel of James or some other part of the "Gospel according to the Hebrews".)

[\(Jerome in Against the Pelagians, Book III, 2, CCEL translation\)](#)

Was Jerome talking about canonical Matthew here? The second quote could indeed be. The first seems to come from something else that was also a part of the "Gospel according to the Hebrews", but not part of the "Gospel according to Matthew".

In [Lives..., Chapter II](#), Jerome talked about "*the Gospel according to the Hebrews*,²⁸ and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin", which I thought was a reference to the Gospel of Matthew the first time I read it. But now I think he was talking about the Gospels written not just by Matthew, but by James as well and perhaps other work(s) considered part of the same volumn. Note that in [Lives..., Chapters 1-3](#) he talks about

Chapter I: Peter and what works were written under his authority

Chapter II: James and what works were written under his authority

Chapter III: Matthew, and what works he wrote.

In Chapter II, Jerome quotes from the "Gospel according to the Hebrews" and I believe what he is saying is that he is quoting from a work that was written by James. He says:

"James,²⁴ who is called the brother of the Lord,²⁵ surnamed the Just, the son of Joseph by another wife, as some think, but, as appears to me, the son of Mary ...<snip>...ordained by the apostles bishop of Jerusalem, wrote a single epistle, which is reckoned among the seven Catholic Epistles<bio info on James omitted here>....

...Josephus records the tradition that this James was of so great sanctity and reputation among the people...<more omitted>...

The Gospel also which is called the Gospel according to the Hebrews,²⁸ and which I have recently translated into Greek and Latin and which also Origen²⁹ often makes use of, after the account of the resurrection of the Saviour says,

"but the Lord, after he had given his grave clothes to the servant of the priest, appeared to James (for James had sworn that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he drank the cup of the Lord until he should see him rising again from among those that sleep)"

and again, a little later, it says

"`Bring a table and bread,' said the Lord." And immediately it is added, "He

brought bread and blessed and brake and gave to James the Just and said to him, 'my brother eat thy bread, for the son of man is risen from among those that sleep.'"

And so he ruled the church of Jerusalem thirty years, that is until the seventh year of Nero..." ([Jerome, in Lives of Illustrious Men, Chapter II, CCEL](#))

Now it would appear that from the context that Jerome is quoting from the "Gospel of James", which is one of the works in the entire volume known as the "Gospel According to the Hebrews", of which, a Hebrew original of canonical Matthew was also part of the collection.

Now the Gospel of James existed in Jerome's day - what happened to it? What happened to Jerome's translation of it? Here's a possible hint:

[Origen \(185-232 AD\)](#) says in [Commentary on John](#):

If any one should lend credence to the Gospel according to the Hebrews, where the Saviour Himself says,

"My mother, the Holy Spirit took me just now by one of my hairs and carried me off to the great mount Tabor," ([Origen's Commentary on John, 6](#))

This is not in Matthew, but apparently either the Gospel of James or some other work in the volume of the "Gospel according to the Hebrews". It described the Holy Spirit as a Maternal figure. This would sure get in the way of the Mariolatry promoted by the RCC in which Mary was described as the "Mother of God" (See <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15464b.htm> for a Catholic reference). So we can see why the RCC may have been severely opposed to the "***Gospel according to the Hebrews***". This might also explain why they promoted a Greek origin of the NT, instead of an Aramaic one, since the Aramaic NT sometimes refers to the Holy Spirit as "She" (more on that later).

Origen also said elsewhere in this

"Should the piece; entitled "The prayer of Joseph," one of the apocryphal works current among the Hebrews, be thought worthy of credence?" ([Origen's Commentary on John, 25](#))

suggesting that there could have been more in the "***Gospel according to the Hebrews***" than the Gospels of Matthew and James.

Eusebius (circa 320 AD) mentioned

"Peter..... also set forth another story about a woman who was accused of many sins before the Lord, which the Gospel according to the Hebrews contains. " (Ecclesiastical History, III, 39:17)

John/Yochanan chapter 8 contains a story that could be considered to fit this description. John/Yoch chapter 8 is not in the Peshitta as well as being omitted from many most of the earliest Greek manuscripts as well. Did Greek scribes decide to add this story to the Gospel of John/Yoch,

taking it from the "*Gospel according to the Hebrews*", so that it would be part of the Gentile canon as well? Perhaps so. That of course would not invalidate the story in any way, since it was part of a believing group of canon, just not part of the canon accepted by the Gentile Christians.

In the earliest days, it seems both Jewish and Gentile believers accepted what we know today as the *New Testament* as canon, but Jewish believers used additional Gospels that Gentile believers did not use. Epiphanius (315-403 AD) tells us that the Nazarenes used "*the New Testament...the Old Testament as well...they have the Gospel according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew...as it was first written*" (Panarion 29) (See <http://www.christian-thinktank.com/qnazonly.html> for more detail) . But he also tells us that the Ebionites had another work which they called "*The Gospel According to the Hebrews*" that was different from the one used by Nazarenes. He said

"In the Gospel that is in general use among them which is called "according to Matthew", which however is not whole and complete but forged and mutilated - they call it the Hebrews Gospel...." (Epiphanius, Panarion 30.13.2-3)

At <http://essenes.crosswinds.net/goeb.htm> are more quotes from Epiphanius that discuss in detail some of the differences between the Nazarene and Ebionite version of the "Gospel According to the Hebrews", and how the Nazarene version is considered to have matched the version the Gentile Church in the "Gospel of Matthew" portion of the "*Gospel according to the Hebrews*". Eusebius also confirms these words saying the Ebionites possessed a "*so-called Gospel according to the Hebrews*" (*Eccl. Hist., Book III, Chapter 27*). All of these comments help us understand that the Gospel of Matthew that was in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* was substantially the same work as what appears in the New Testament, but in Hebrew, and possibly combined with other writings.

Jerome wrote a commentary on Matthew in which he made a lot of comparisons of the Hebrew version used by Jewish believers in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* and the Greek version of his time, letting us know that they are substantially the same Gospel, with only minor reading differences here and there that can easily be attributed to issues like translator's choice of interpretation of words and/or scribal omission of a certain sentence or phrase. Among the examples of his analysis:

Matt 5:22 - Jerome says the Hebrew version is missing the phrase "without a cause" in some manuscripts, but it was present in others. This would indicate it was in most of his manuscripts. However, the Greek manuscripts vary in this one as well.

Matt 11:12 - The Greek version says "the violent seize it" while Jerome says the Hebrew version says the kingdom is "plundered".

Matt 11:25 - The Greek version says "I praise You" while Jerome says the Hebrew version says "I thank You".

Now it's obvious from this list that Jerome was citing very small differences between the Hebrew and Greek versions that exist even in variances within the same language at times. And to be citing differences this small, it's obvious that their overall phraseology of the sentences must be substantially the same, or he would not be analyzing the two works at this finely detailed of a level.

In both cases from Matthew 11, the modern duTillet agrees with the ancient rendering of Matthew over the Greek. It agrees with the minority reading of the ancient Hebrew copies of Matthew 5:22 (where the phrase in question is missing). But then some of the differences Jerome cites do not match any existing Hebrew version of Matthew. For example, he says that in Matt 4:5, where the Greek says "holy city", the Hebrew says "Jerusalem", which is not how *any* Semitic versions read (duTillet, Peshitta, Old Syriac, etc). Enough other differences exist to suggest that our modern Hebrew versions have at least evolved somewhat from the original Hebrew version, making the more ancient Peshitta and Old Syriac versions important witnesses as to what the original contained alongside any input from possible existing Hebrew versions that may have descended from the original Hebrew version.

However, even within the same family of manuscripts and within the same languages, we see variants like this. For example, Some Greek manuscripts say in Matt 3:14 "John was hindering" while others say "he was hindering" and 5 of 7 TR publishers omit the phrase "in which the Son of Man comes" from the Greek Matt 25:13. But modern experts can't even agree on what was and wasn't in Erasmus' original *Textus Receptus* word for word either, and that wasn't so long ago. Comparisons of one manuscript with another frequently vary based on spelling variances, omissions of words or phrases, and interchanging pronouns with proper names.

Here's another insight as to why we can safely say that the canonical Greek Matthew is a translation from a Hebrew version. In one of Jerome's many comparisons of the Hebrew and Greek versions of Matthew, he comments on the phrase "Bethlehem of Judaea" in Matt 2:5 by saying "[this is a mistake of the scribes, for I believe that the evangelist wrote it as we read it in the Hebrew "of Judah" not "Judaea".](#)" This is a significant quote, because it suggests several things:

That we should expect a word-for-word agreement between the Hebrew and Greek texts. Jerome's comments make no sense unless this is the expectancy. And this would not be the expectancy unless one is a word-for-word translation of the other. This comparison isn't just word-for-word, but nearly letter-for-letter here.

That the Hebrew text is more authoritative , since Jerome appears to the reading of the Hebrew as right, and the Greek version as wrong.

So we see that the **original** (not Ebionite) version of the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* contained

The Hebrew original of our **Gospel of Matthew** substantially the same as we have it today.

A Gospel written by James

Possibly other works, including

a possible "Prayer of Joseph"

The Gospel of John/Yoch?

others?

John may have been included since the story of the accused woman was moved to his Gospel. Note also that Origen comments from the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* while he's analyzing the Gospel of John. But there's no solid evidence that this is the case, and we can only speculate as to whether Mark, Luke or other works were included as well.

But it seems that Gentile canon of what we know today as the *New Testament* was only *part* of the entire work of canon that was accepted by the earliest Jewish believers in the Messiah with the *Gospel according to the Hebrews* being another part of it. Was this due to the references of the Holy Spirit as a maternal figure? Was it because of Torah? Was there something else the Roman Church found offensive? We don't know for sure. But for whatever reason, the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* has no extant copies other than the Matthew of the Church's New Testament and quotations of it from various sources.

It may be possible that The *Gospel According to the Hebrews* was written in 2 languages. Note that Jerome said

"In the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which is written in the Chaldee and Syrian language, but in Hebrew characters"

Reading this in English, it sounds like he's saying it was written in two different dialects of Aramaic. But he could also be saying it was written in, what we would call in English, "Hebrew" and "Aramaic". "Syrian" was the Greek/Latin term for "Aramaic", though today in English we might use that term to refer to the particular dialect of Aramaic spoken in the Syrian area. While English speaking people often use "Chaldean" to refer to a specific dialect of Aramaic, it was used in Jerome's time as a generic term for "Semitic". That is, Aramaic, Sumerian, Arabic, and Hebrew were all considered "Chaldean" languages. Perhaps this is because the society of their day all viewed Babylon as the source of all Semitic culture and that Hebrew and Syrian all evolved from Chaldean form of Aramaic. Irregardless of whether that's right or whether that's wrong, if they believed that, it would explain why they used this term this way.

Evidence of this is found in the writings of Philo. Philo says the Jews "[original ancestors belonged to the Chaldeans, but this people migrated from Syria to Egypt](#)" (*Apology for the Jews*, 6.1). In *On Moses*, he says "[Moses was, by race, a Chaldean](#)" (*On Moses*, 5) and then only a little later calls his mother a "[Hebrew](#)" (*On Moses*, 16). Often, when a Hebrew word agrees with an Aramaic cognant, he simply calls it a "Chaldean" word and he sometimes refers to the Hebrew language as "Chaldean" (*On Moses*, 29-32). He says the "Law" (Torah) was originally written "[only in Chaldean in ancient times](#)" (*On Moses II*, 29), referring obviously to Hebrew and then says that Ptolemey had Torah translated from "Chaldean" to Greek. But elsewhere he uses "Chaldean" to refer to something Babylonian, and not Jewish at all. Examples include

Migration of Abraham, 178-179, where he talks of how Chaldeans substituted the concepts of "fate" and "necessity" for God.

On Dreams, 53, he calls Chaldeans "astronomers". See also *On Abraham*, 69

Genesis Book IV, 92, contrasts "Hebrew" with "Chaldean"

So he does indeed use the term "Chaldean" at times in ways that are exclusive of Hebrew. This

double usage of the term is best explained in light of his comments from *Apology for the Jews*, 6.1, in which he describes Jews as "ancestors" of Chaldeans, and therefore saw "Hebrew" as a subset of the term "Chaldean", which also included Babylonians, Syrians, Sumerians, etc.

So we see that "Chaldean" was used similar to how we use "Semitic" today (though not with all the same connotations/etymologies/etc). Getting back to Jerome's quote, he's says that the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* was written in more than one language. We know from several sources it included the original Hebrew Matthew. So it's quite like that one or more of the additional works that were in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* may have been written in Syrian or Aramaic. Jerome said it was written in "[Chaldee and Syrian language, but in Hebrew characters](#)". Now why did he say "Chaldean" rather than "Hebrew"? Probably to emphasize the mix of Hebrew and Aramaic. He was probably trying to emphasize how the various books that were in GH were a mix. We understand Matthew to have been one of the books in GH, and Jerome, as well as others, described it as written in "Hebrew". It probably had other books written in Aramaic, and maybe others written in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic (perhaps similar to Daniel or Ezra). But according to Jerome, even the Aramaic parts were in Hebrew letters.

Now many critics of the Gospel claim that when ancient writers say Matthew was written in Hebrew, they really MEANT Aramaic. One weakness in that argument lies in the fact that if that were true, why didn't they use the word "Chaldean" ? "Hebrew" is getting more specific, thus there's no reason to try and reinterpret the wording history has handed us.
