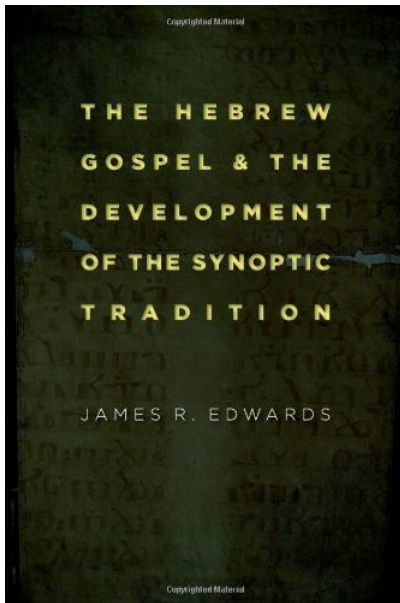


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The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition

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The author of the present work (henceforth *The Hebrew Gospel*), James R. Edwards, is the Bruner-Welch Professor of Theology at Whitworth University, Spokane, Washington. He has made previous contributions to New Testament study, including commentaries on Romans (NIBC; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992) and Mark (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), as well as *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005). The present volume, which boasts endorsements by Markus Bockmuehl (Oxford) and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Princeton), is the product of a decade of research. Edwards has undertaken the arduous task of identifying, compiling, and translating scattered references to and quotations of the Hebrew Gospel in the church fathers and early Christian texts. Edwards, however, does not stop there; he also advances what he calls “a new paradigm, at least in part, for the resolution of Synoptic problem” (xviii). In this new paradigm the Hebrew Gospel is posited as a source for the Gospel of Luke and the Q hypothesis is bid *adieu* (albeit with qualification) as an explanation for the source of the double tradition (i.e., non-Markan material that Matthew and Luke share in common).

Following a brief preface (xi–xiii) and an introduction (xviii–xxxiv), Edwards presents the content of *The Hebrew Gospel* in eight chapters (1–258) and concludes with an epilogue (259–62). There are three appendices: “References to the Hebrew Gospel in the First Nine

Centuries” (263–91); “Chart of Semitisms in the Gospel of Luke” (292–332); and “Luke 6:5 (D)” (333–35). Edwards rounds out the volume with a selective bibliography (336–41) and four indices: modern authors (342–45), subjects (346–47), Scripture references (348–55), and other ancient writings (356–60).

In the introduction (xviii–xxxiv) Edwards spells out the suppositions and rationale of his study. He notes that he remains reasonably certain about Markan priority. His misgivings about Q, however, coupled with a rejuvenation of Hebrew study, which led him to a new appreciation of Semitisms in the Gospel of Luke, encouraged his pursuit of another explanation for Gospel origins. His resultant thesis, *in nuce*, is that “the high concentration of Semitisms in Special Luke—portions of Luke that are not shared in common with Matthew and/or Mark—can be accounted for on the assumption that they derive from the original Hebrew Gospel” (xxi). Edwards sees three corroborative lines of evidence supporting this thesis, the first being the aforementioned high concentration of Semitisms in Special Luke. Second, there are the some eighty patristic references to and citations of the Hebrew Gospel. Third, there is the prologue of Luke (1:1–4), which mentions the use of eye-witness sources in the composition of the Gospel.

In the first two chapters Edwards surveys “References to the ‘Hebrew Gospel’ in Early Christianity” (1–43) and “Quotations from the Hebrew Gospel in Early Christianity” (44–96), respectively. The purpose of the initial chapter is to give an overview of the explicit testimony to the Hebrew Gospel in the patristic era. Edwards looks at references to an early Hebrew Gospel found in seventeen church fathers spanning from Papias (ca. 60–130) in the early second century to the Venerable Bede (ca. 673–735) in the eighth. He additionally looks briefly at four scholia in Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲙ/01), and a reference preserved in the Islamic Hadith (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 1.3), which he dates differently on pages 42 (ninth and tenth centuries [?]) and 289 (eighth century). In the second chapter, Edwards surveys citations of five fathers (Ignatius, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome) who purportedly quote from the Hebrew Gospel.

Chapter 3, “Taking Stock of the Hebrew Gospel in Early Christianity” (97–124), is a consolidation of Edwards’s findings in the first two chapters. He sets them forth in a series of six conclusions. He notes that in early Christianity the Hebrew Gospel was (1) widespread and widely known and (2) endowed with special authority. Edwards further concludes (3) that the Hebrew Gospel was not a compilation of the Synoptic Gospels, as is often suggested, but is repeatedly and distinctively similar to the Gospel of Luke. Based on its close affinities to the Gospel of Luke, Edwards posits that it was most plausibly a source of the Gospel of Luke. In the remaining portion of the chapter Edwards discusses the relation among the “Jewish Christian Gospels.” Here Edwards draws three further conclusions in connection with the Hebrew Gospel: (4) he distinguishes it from the

“Traditions of Matthais” (5); he contends that the apostle Matthew published a Hebrew Gospel in the Hebrew language that bore several related titles; and (6) he maintains that the Hebrew Gospel is not textually discontinuous with either the Gospel of the Ebionites or that of the Nazarenes; rather, he favors seeing the latter two as modifications of the Hebrew Gospel by the groups who employed them (cf. 116).

In chapter 4 Edwards discusses the phenomenon of “Semitisms in the Gospel of Luke” (125–53). He looks at a wide range of philological data, which, in conjunction with appendix 2, “Chart of Semitisms in the Gospel of Luke,” suggests to him that the Greek of the Gospel of Luke displays a strongly Semitic influence not shared in the same proportions by either Matthew or Mark. He contends that this influence is not confined to Luke 1–2 and that it is most conspicuous in “Special Luke,” which he describes as “having no parallel with Matthew and/or Luke” (142). The aforementioned philological details, coupled with a brief examination of the details of the Lukan prologue (Luke 1:1–4), form the basis of Edwards’s conclusion that the Hebrew Gospel is one of the unnamed sources that Luke employed.

“The *Hebrew Gospel*” (154–86) is the subject of chapter 5. Here Edwards pursues the question as to whether the Semitic source of Special Luke can be defined more closely. Edwards finds two commonly employed explanations regarding Semitisms in Special Luke—the Septuagint hypothesis and Aramaic hypothesis—to be unsatisfactory. Based on an examination of the use of Hebrew and Aramaic among first-century Palestinian Jews and representative Jewish religious literature of Second Temple period, Edwards maintains that Hebrew was the normative language of Jewish religious literature. Edwards concludes that the combination of the unsatisfactory nature of the alternative hypotheses and the normative nature of Hebrew in religious literature indicate that the language of the Hebrew Gospel was indeed Hebrew and that Luke used this source—whether directly or indirectly through translation (cf. 128 earlier)—in the composition of his Gospel.

Edwards next traces the factors that led to “The Neglect of the Hebrew Gospel in Christian Tradition” (187–208). Edwards offers two explanations to account for this neglect. One is the historical parting of the ways in the patristic period between the more Jewish form(s) of Christianity, represented by and the Jewish groups, like the Ebionites and Nazarenes, who used the Hebrew Gospel exclusively, and the more Gentile form(s) of Christianity represented in Greek and Latin churches. The second factor is the regrettable legacy of anti-Semitism that characterized much of European Christian scholarship since the Enlightenment, which downplayed the Jewish roots of Christianity, on the one hand, and accented Christianity’s distinctiveness from and superiority over Judaism, on the other.

In chapter 7 Edwards bids “*Adieu to Q*” (209–42). He maintains that the Gospel of Mark and the Hebrew Gospel account for the majority, but not all, of the Gospel of Luke. He designates the remaining remnant “the double tradition” (234–40; in Edwards’s reconstruction, it consists of 177 verses; see appendix 2). Throughout this chapter Edwards offers a series of circumstantial arguments against the commonly held Q hypothesis. One is the narrative nature of the Gospels, which makes a sayings source unlikely. A second is the cultural context in which the theory arose (Enlightenment rationality, which eschewed the miraculous and viewed Jesus as a moral teacher and example). Third is the lack of patristic reference to it, despite the references to a wide body of ancient literature known to the fathers (he notes that Jerome alone attested nearly eight hundred works). Fourth is the possibility of other explanations. Edwards maintains that the double tradition can be explained in one of three ways. It derives (1) from the Hebrew Gospel, (2) additional material in the same source Mark used, or (3) some form of the Q hypothesis. Edwards concedes that there is not enough evidence to affirm any of these possibilities with confidence but implies that the third explanation may not be as strong as the first.

Chapter 8 is an examination of “The Hebrew Gospel and the Gospel of Matthew” (243–58). It deals with two main issues. The first is Matthew’s probable use of Luke (“Matthean Posteriority,” 245–52). Edwards maintains that the twenty-three pairs of shared interrelationships among Matthew, Mark, and Luke indicate that Matthew is either the source of material for Mark and Luke or the recipient of them. Edwards considers the latter more probable. The second question is why canonical Matthew came to bear the name of the apostle Matthew (“The Authorship of Canonical Matthew,” 253–58), when Matthew was likely the author of the Hebrew Gospel (composed originally in Hebrew), not canonical Matthew (composed originally in Greek). Edwards offers an “honorary hypothesis” to explain why the apostle Matthew came to be understood as the principal source behind canonical Greek Matthew. He suggests this explanation is bolstered by two circumstantial points. First, the early church consistently maintained a relationship between canonical Matthew and the apostle Matthew. Second, both the Hebrew Gospel and canonical Greek Matthew were composed for and addressed to Jewish-Christian communities. They shared not a common language of origin (Hebrew) but a common audience. Owing to the significance of the common mission implied in both documents, they both retained the connection with name of the apostle Matthew.

In his brief epilogue, Edwards spells out twenty-three “Summary Theses” (259–62), organized in conjunction with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (he divides the 21st letter into 21 [ψ] and 22 [ψ], and numbers 23 as 23). Here I will not attempt to reproduce the content of the twenty-three points but rather simply note that they recapitulate various aspects of his arguments in the preceding eight chapters outlined above.

It must be noted before moving from description to evaluation that Edwards's *The Hebrew Gospel* is not an easy volume either to summarize or to evaluate. It is dense, articulate, and well-supplied with ample references to ancient Christian sources, philological argument, sociohistorical analysis, and selective interaction with a wide range of critical scholarship from the eighteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. Regardless of whether readers find the various aspects Edwards's argument persuasive, many will be impressed with the wide body of knowledge that he exhibits throughout *The Hebrew Gospel*.

Taken as a whole, Edwards's work exhibits many favorable aspects. The foremost is his impressive work of identifying, compiling, translating, and interpreting the many scattered references to and quotations of the Hebrew Gospel in the church fathers and early Christian texts (and sometimes beyond them). Along the way one finds insightful treatment of some long-debated passages from the fathers, including the meaning of Papias's testimony concerning Matthew's implementation of τὰ λόγια, preserved in Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 3.39.16 (see 2–10 and 215–17), as well as his sympathetic treatment of Jerome's discussion of Ignatius in *Illustrious Men* 16 (see 48–55). Edwards's decision to inventory and provide the original languages and English translations of references to the Hebrew Gospel in the main text and in a summary appendix (263–91), moreover, promises to ensure that *The Hebrew Gospel* will be a valuable resource for subsequent scholarship.

There are also a number of additional insights found throughout the book. These include the religio- and sociohistorical factors that led to the neglect of the Hebrew Gospel in Christian tradition (ch. 6), the sociohistorical and cultural-historical setting in Germany during the development of the Q hypothesis (218–23), and the interpretive problems related to Schleiermacher's treatment of Papias's testimony concerning Matthew's implementation of τὰ λόγια. Edwards notes that Schleiermacher restricted τὰ λόγια to teaching alone (215). He additionally employed an inferior text of Eusebius's *Eccl. Hist.* 3.39.16 (216). Edwards points out that Schleiermacher's text used the verb *συνεγράψατο*, from *συγγράφω*, which means "collect" or "collate." The critical text of Eusebius followed by Kirsopp Lake in the Loeb series, by contrast, reflects the verb *συνετάξατο*, from *συντάσσω*, which means to "arrange an account" or "write a book." Schleiermacher thirdly adopted a doubtful rendering of the verb *ἠρμήνευσε* as "explain" or "apply" rather than "interpret" or "translate" (216–17).

Some matters to which Edwards calls attention will likely require a much closer look in Synoptic studies, such as the viability of the common explanatory theories regarding the strongly Semitic flavor of the Gospel of Luke. Linguistically capable specialists like Dalman (1909), Lagrange (1921), Schlatter (1931), Fitzmyer (1981), to name but four,

have recognized the Semitic flavor of Luke, but this phenomenon has not always elicited the same conclusions. In this regard, Edwards's second appendix, "Charts of Semitisms in the Gospel of Luke," along with his linguistic discussion in chapters 4 and 5, offers a convenient resource for future Synoptic scholarship. Yet it is not unlikely that specialists will raise questions regarding the particulars of Edwards's argument in these chapters. They will also likely raise an occasional eyebrow with turns of phrase like "hyper-Semitic verses" (145–46), "*qualified* Septuagintism" (158, emphasis original), and the assumptions implicit in a statement like "for although Luke *may* have been able to translate Hebrew, he does not appear to have been a Jew, and it is unlikely that he thought in either Hebrew or Aramaic" (12, emphasis original). (The latter could be taken to imply that one's ethnicity, rather than one's familiarity with a language, determines one's ability to think in a language.)

There are some additional weaknesses with *The Hebrew Gospel* as well. Edwards's overall proposal regarding Synoptic origins is much more speculative in nature than is his work on the Hebrew Gospel itself. It is doubtful that many will be persuaded to connect the dots regarding Gospel origins in quite the way that Edwards does. The resultant model that Edwards offers (e.g., 262), in any case, is a modified *four-source* hypothesis, with (for him) two largely certain sources (the Gospel of Mark, used by Matthew and Luke, and the Hebrew Gospel, employed by Luke) and two less-than-certain sources (the *double tradition*, used by Matthew and Luke, and additional sources of Matthew). Edwards's resultant model looks somewhat similar to Streeter's earlier proposal (see, e.g., *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins, The Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, and Dates* [London: MacMillan, 1924], 150), though, of course, Edwards does not attempt to identify either the dates of the identified sources or their geographical provenance, as Streeter did.

Edwards's additional critique of the Q hypothesis is unlikely to dissuade adherents, particularly when he himself retains the rubric of "double tradition" (262, albeit with "some doubt" [n. 1]) and further concedes that the "'Q'-like option *could* be correct" (240, emphasis original). Edwards's principal point of contention, in any case, seems to be with a model of Q that regards it strictly as a sayings source. This, however, is not the only possibility. Here it might have also proved helpful to engage alternative models such as Larry Hurtado's *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* ([Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003], 217–57), who maintains that Q reflects a "narrative 'world'" (246) or "narrative substructure" (247). In Edwards's discussion of "Special Luke," which he describes rather broadly as "having no parallel with Matthew and/or Luke" (142), "Q and Luke" (233–40), and "Matthean Posteriority" (245–52), it might also have proved useful had he engaged Mark Goodacre's *The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2001), esp. 81–

120. Edwards would find a partial ally in Goodacre, particularly in his desire to bid *adieu* to Q and Luke's use of Mark. Yet Goodacre gives detailed attention to Luke's editorial work and draws precisely the opposite conclusion that Edwards does in maintaining that Luke employed Matthew and not the reverse, as Edwards argues.

It may have proved advisable had Edwards restricted the scope of the present volume to the task of identifying, compiling, translating, and interpreting the many scattered references to and quotations of the Hebrew Gospel in the church fathers and early Christian texts and how they have been interpreted in critical scholarship and then taken on the daunting challenge of Synoptic origins in a subsequent volume. As it is, one hopes that Edwards's salutary work on the Hebrew Gospel and many helpful insights throughout will not go underappreciated because he overreaches with the perceived implications regarding Synoptic origins. Ultimately, however, much about the approximate 2,200 lines of the Hebrew Gospel, as attested by Nicephorus (see 15, 104), will remain a mystery unless some Dead Sea Scrolls-like discovery brings a copy to light. *The Hebrew Gospel* is a salient reminder of what such a find could mean for Synoptic studies. In the meantime, Edwards's provocative volume offers readers much to contemplate.

Regarding edits, while the book is largely well edited, particularly given the wide number of languages employed throughout, some incongruities remain. Inconsistent dating regarding Islamic Hadith (*Sahih al-Bukhari* 1.3), as mentioned above, is found on 42 (ninth and tenth centuries [?]) and 289 (eighth century). In citing the Hebrew and Aramaic throughout the book in conventional block script (esp. in chs. 4–5 and appendices 1–2), it is not clear why Tiberian pointing is employed occasionally (e.g., 135, 138, 229, 263). Typographical errors are evident on 159 (spelling: ζανθ' [> άνθ']), 164 n. 26 and 165 n. 27 (spelling: Pseduepigraphon [> Pseudepigraphon]), 229 n. 39 (the numbers of the reference to Davies and Allison are listed as 84–485; additionally, the volume number is missing), 271 (lack of quotation mark at end of the citation from Harnack and Elliott), 290 (spacing and spelling: “calledaccoridng”), and 333 (spelling: μόμου > νόμου).