

James Rendel Harris. *New Testament Autographs and Other Essays*. Edited by Alessandro Falcetta. New Testament Monographs 7. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006. ISBN: 1905048157. Pp. xvi + 256. €83.50, cloth.

1. Without doubt, James Rendel Harris was one of the most distinguished scholars of the New Testament of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His studies, although mostly outdated and corrected here and there, are an example of innovative and courageous academic work that was and still is hard to find. Basically his contribution to the study of the text of the New Testament turned him into an influential protagonist of the story of New Testament textual criticism. Without him important artefacts from early Christianity, above all Syriac manuscripts, would not have been known since the days around the turn to the 20th century and could not have been investigated in the way they were and still are. Therefore, it is very much welcome that eight of his studies are republished by Alessandro Falcetta (Postdoctoral Fellow at the Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII in Bologna), who is about to complete a detailed biography of this outstanding and prolific scholar, and by Sheffield Phoenix Press in a fine hardcover collection with additional information.

2. The book opens with the obligatory introductory sections (acknowledgements, preface, editorial note and abbreviations, and publication credits) before Falcetta introduces James Rendel Harris as what he evidently was: a pioneer in the field of textual criticism who dared to follow or even find new paths, no matter whether or not they may have led him into the wrong direction (1-15). Then come the eight studies originally published between 1882 and 1932, which Falcetta elaborately and adequately adjusts to modern standards of publication as follows (xiii): “In the process of writing, some harmonisation among the essays has been necessary, since Rendel Harris is not consistent in such matters as italics or quotations marks. Spelling mistakes and wrong or missing diacritical marks in the Greek quotations have been corrected. Biblical references have been conformed to a consistent pattern.” In addition, Falcetta adds complete bibliographical reference where appropriate and also notes if he has difficulties in tracing the work or text Rendel Harris was referring to.

3. Chapter one offers Rendel Harris’s classic “New Testament Autographs” (17-71), followed by chapter two with his “Methods of Research in Eastern Libraries” (72-82), and chapter three with “The Rate of Progress in New Testament Research” (83-97). The other chapters contain “The Book of Testimonies” (98-116), “The Origin of the Prologue of St John’s Gospel” (117-84), “The First Tatian Reading in the Greek New Testament” (185-91), “Josephus and his Testimony” (192-216), and “Nicodemus” (217-31). All the studies are meticulously updated according to the programme set and a fine example of editing. The selection of essays is appropriate to demonstrate the diverse facets of Rendel Harris’s eventful scholarly life (ix).

4. Chapter nine presents five letters James Rendel Harris wrote to Herbert G. Wood, who later became Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham (232-39), in which dogmatic issues are discussed and, for instance, Albert Schweitzer’s *Quest of the Historical Jesus* is a point of discussion. In these letters Rendel Harris’s vivid style becomes alive again.

5. The book comes with a general bibliography of James Rendel Harris’s works and other titles cited in the studies (240-7) and some indices (248-56; references to biblical and other writings; authors).

6. The editor's hope "that this collection can achieve the same goal aimed at by Rendel Harris's studies: to stimulate debate and provoke fresh research that may yield 'daily discoveries'" (xi) is hopefully fulfilled by this interesting collection of some of the fascinating writings of an extravagant and outstanding scholar. Alessandro Falcetta deserves respect and thanks for doing his job as an editor perfectly and for saving Rendel Harris's work from sinking into oblivion.

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