

# THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Volume I

JANUARY 1897

Number 1

## THEOLOGICAL AGNOSTICISM.

By ALEXANDER BALMAIN BRUCE,  
Glasgow.

"AGNOSTIC" is a modern epithet. It was invented some forty years ago by the late Mr. Huxley to distinguish his religious position from that of theists, pantheists, atheists, and to indicate that he, for his part, was not able to make any affirmations of any sort about God; not even that he is, or is not, still less what he is. Thus used the epithet denotes an attitude antithetic to that of the ancient gnostics who believed that an unlimited knowledge of God and the supersensible world was possible, and that its attainment was man's chief good. Since Huxley first coined the term it has steadily gained ever-increasing currency, and, following the fate of all new words, it has been used with various shades of meaning. In strictness it should be applied only to those who, like that distinguished scientist, profess absolute, unqualified agnosticism concerning God. But there is an agnostic *Zeitgeist* which influences many men who have not reached that extreme position. And so we have to reckon with a modified, partial agnosticism, professed not by unbelieving men of science, or by skeptical philosophers, but by religious men or theologians, and consisting in a severe *restriction* of the knowledge of God attainable by man. It has its ultimate unconscious source in the spirit of the time, and its conscious grounds in philosophic theories of knowledge, in particular views as to the idea

gladly believe in a time when there were no Kurds, but evidence is against such an opinion.

On p. 66 we are told that in an interesting note Dr. Lamy says this opinion [of the deconsecration of Judas' eucharist] was peculiar to S. Ephraem. Dr. Lamy goes on to quote from Bar Hebraeus the statement that Mar Ephraem and *Mar Jacob* held this view. So it can hardly have been peculiar in the sense that Dr. Hill implies. The Syrian church seems to have discussed the question not a little; of course Ephraem may have set them at it.

When the question of the character of Tatian's text comes up, Dr. Hill wisely admits that the *Diatessaron* may have undergone some changes between the time of Tatian and that of Ephraem. Still he clings too closely to the belief that Tatian harmonized our existing gospels without apocryphal additions. And on p. 32 the reason is given for disbelieving the story of the fire in the Jordan to have been in Tatian's text, because "it was not in the gospels he was harmonizing." How is this proved? Especially when it is admitted immediately after that the tradition exists in two old Latin MSS. It seems to us that it may very likely have been in Tatian. Certainly the reason given would necessitate the production of Tatian's copies.

On p. 7 we are told that Aphraates, the Persian sage, and his own bishop, James of Nisibis, made free use of the *Diatessaron* in their writings. The works commonly ascribed to James of Nisibis are the same as those which are now published under the name of Aphraates. Or is Dr. Hill referring to some works of James of Nisibis other than those published at Rome in the last century from the Armenian?

But now let us conclude our rapid reading of a painstaking and useful book; and let us hope that it will be read, amongst others, by Mr. Walter R. Cassels.

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

A CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK. By the REV. EZRA P. GOULD, S.T.D., Professor of New Testament Literature and Language, Divinity School of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Philadelphia. "The International Critical Commentary." New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1896. Pp. lvii + 317. \$2.50.

PROFESSOR GOULD'S *Commentary on St. Mark* professes to be distinctly critical. It belongs to the series of critical commentaries now

being issued under the editorship of Drs. Briggs, Driver and Plummer. It must be reviewed and estimated therefore in accordance with the standard which it sets for itself. In the preface the author declares his critical theme to be "the interrelation of the synoptics," by which is meant specifically the "two-document theory," according to which the primary sources of the synoptics are Mark's gospel and a collection of Christ's discourses written by Matthew. This theory necessarily attaches special value to Mark as an historical source for the events of Christ's life, and is supposed often to enable the critic to discriminate, approximately, the facts, from their embellishments in the gospel narratives. Hence, no doubt, the reason why Mark has been selected as the first gospel to be discussed in this series.

In the introduction Professor Gould briefly states the "two-document" theory; gives an analysis of Mark's book with a brief account of the writer and a few words on the date of his writing (which he concludes to have been "about 70 A. D."); then discusses "the person and principles of Jesus in Mark's gospel;" and adds a short chapter on "the gospels in the second century," and another upon "recent critical literature." Then follows a statement of the authorities for the determination of the text, and, finally, the commentary itself.

In reference first to the textual criticism, it should be stated that textual notes, with citations of editors and manuscripts, etc., are appended at the close of the exegetical comments on the several verses, and are very abundant. They appear, in fact, needlessly abundant. The majority of the various readings are of no exegetical importance, and, since the Greek text of the gospel is not printed in full, reference must constantly be made to the Testament in order to appreciate the notes. While the author's text nearly agrees with those of Tischendorf and Westcott and Hort, he exercises his own judgment. He does not state his principles of criticism; but, judging from specific instances, they appear unduly subjective. Thus, in 6:14, he prefers *ἔλεγεν* to *ἔλεγεν*, because of the view he has adopted of the reasons governing Herod in his inquiry about John; he thinks *ῥαντίζονται*, instead of *βαπτίζονται*, in 7:4, "a manifest emendation," though it has the support of B<sup>8</sup>; in 14:68 he still inserts "*καὶ ἀλέκτωρ ἐφώνησε*," in spite of the weighty evidence against it, and the probability that it was inserted to explain "*ἐκ δευτέρου*" in vs. 72; in 15:1 he accepts "*ἐτοιμάσαντες*" instead of *ποιήσαντες*, on the express ground of "internal evidence," which means, as the commentary shows, that the author believes Matthew and Mark to give a different account of Christ's

trial before the Sanhedrim from that given by Luke; a view which, he thinks, *ἐτοιμάσας* supports. There is no discussion of the relative value of "groups" of authorities in Mark, and such considerations do not appear to have determined the conclusions. The account of the history of the text (pp. lii, liii) is rather obscurely given. We have not taken pains to examine the citations of textual authorities, but have chanced upon a few errors. The "Peshito" is called (p. lii) the "oldest Syriac version," and no mention is made of the Lewis or Curetonian recensions, the latter of which contains some of the closing verses of the gospel. The old Latin version should not be assigned "to the very beginning of the second century" (p. liv). In the note on 1:34, Codex N is misquoted. So is B under 2:16 (*cf.* Gregory's *Proleg.*, p. 1261), and the evidence of B makes Professor Gould's text in that verse very improbable. Under 5:21 the strong attestation for WH's reading, which Gould rejects, is not given. Under 6:22 he does not notice that WH's reading *αὐτοῦ* replaces not *αὐτῆς*, but *αὐτῆς τῆς*, of Tex. Rec. Erroneous, too, is the note under 14:58, "WH. has the singular reading *ἀναστήσω*." WH. read *οικοδομήσω*, the other reading being simply noted as "Western." But of course the discussion of the last eleven verses of the gospel presents the chief textual question. Here the external evidence pro and con is very inadequately stated. Professor Gould, rightly we think, rejects the passage, but gives the reader little idea of the real weight of the argument, or of the evidence for the extreme antiquity of the addition. His own judgment is evidently determined wholly by internal considerations. The linguistic argument against the passage is vigorously marshaled, but the counter arguments are not presented. His final and main objection proceeds on the assumption that the addition, following, he thinks, Luke's narrative, makes the ascension occur on the day of the resurrection, and excludes all appearances of Christ in Galilee, whereas Mark, like Matthew, evidently had the latter in mind. But vs. 9 evidently implies John's account, and that evangelist believed in appearances of Christ both in Jerusalem and Galilee. Hence the author of the addition should not, any more than Luke in reality, be held to exclude the Galilean appearances, and this argument against the authenticity of the addition falls to the ground. Professor Gould holds also that Mark's work was intended to end with vs. 8, which is almost incredible even for so inelegant a writer as the evangelist. The whole discussion of the gospel's close can hardly be regarded as satisfactory.

The commentary itself is arranged upon an excellent plan. The gospel is divided into the brief sections into which it naturally falls. At the beginning of each of these an expository summary of its contents is placed. Then follow notes upon the particular verses. Condensation is evidently aimed at; so much so that the style frequently becomes obscure and at times the comments become little more than occasional remarks. An abundance of grammatical and lexical notes are given, generally at the bottom of the page. Many of them are rather elementary, but will make the commentary useful to young students. The authorities usually cited in these notes are Thayer's *Lexicon*, Winer's *Grammar*, and Burton's *Moods and Tenses*, references to which occur constantly. Occasionally, however, the author slips. Under 1:11 the aor. εὐδόκησα is translated "*I came to take pleasure,*" and is said to denote "the historical process by which God came to take pleasure in Jesus during his earthly life." In support of this use of the aorist, reference is made to Winer and Burton. But the reference to Winer is wrong (it should be 40. 5. δ 2), and Burton takes a different view of the passage. As the latter points out, Matt. 12:18 (to which Gould does not allude) makes it probable that the aorist here amounts to a vivid present, conceived of indeed as the issue of previous action, but forcibly suggesting the result. Again, under 14:41, the literal translation of ἦλθεν ἡ ὥρα gives a misleading idea of the force of the aorist, and, on a previous page, the statement that "the present imperative does not command the beginning of an action, but the continuance of an action already begun," if meant to be a general remark, is also likely to mislead. There are a few annoying errors in the references. Besides the one noted above, on p. 93 "Winer 144" should be "44;" on p. 94 the reference to Winer means *page 272*, though the number only is given; on p. 157 "Win. 43" should be 42, and "footnote \* p. 156" should apparently be 158.

The exegetical part of the commentary aims simply to bring out the meaning of the evangelist. The author is familiar with the work of modern exegetes, but makes no parade of the history of opinion. As occasion offers, he briefly treats such subjects as the miracles of Jesus, the brethren of Jesus, the authority of Scripture, etc., but the discussions are very meager. He writes, however, with independent judgment and in some instances with much insight. We have read with pleasure his discussion of the healing of the leper (p. 32); his remarks on the miracles, directed against Holtzmann (p. 33); and, in particular, his too brief treatment of the transfiguration (p. 161) in

which Professor Gould makes some exceedingly suggestive and illuminating comments. Yet we think the commentary open to serious criticism from several points of view. (1) It betrays a general disposition to accept rationalistic interpretations. We read (pp. 3, 16) that the Old Testament contains no expectation of a personal Messiah, and (p. 15) that the synoptics *exclude* John's account of the early Judean ministry, though (p. 18) John's account of the first acquaintance of the disciples with Jesus is admitted to be necessary to explain the synoptic narrative. The discussion of demoniacal possessions (pp. 23, 27) is very hesitating, and in it the author seeks refuge in naturalistic explanations; and, while the actuality of the miracles is at times defended, dubious expressions elsewhere occur (pp. 86, 122). A distinction is also drawn between facts of Christ's life and the reports of them by the evangelists (pp. 37, 90, 92). The latter we must critically sift in order to reach the former. This places the exegete under the guidance of the philosopher. It sometimes leads also to explanations as incredible as any miracle. An instance of this occurs on p. 92 in the discussion of the Gadarene demoniac. The story in the gospel is said to be "a tax on our belief." "The *facts* in the case are the cure and the rush of the frightened swine." "Leave out the elements of the story contributed by the idea of possession and substitute the theory of lunacy, and the rational account of the fright and destruction of the swine is that it was occasioned by some paroxysm of the lunatic himself." This explanation is truly marvelous. What "paroxysm" could possibly have accomplished such a result? And why should there be belief in the fright of the swine at all, or why should we not reduce their number, say to half a dozen, if we may discriminate between the record and the truth? Again Christ's prediction of his death and resurrection is held to have been given in language much less distinct than is reported by the evangelists (pp. 159, 197, 198). The latter is thought to be inconsistent with the subsequent conduct of the disciples. But, as Professor Gould himself points out (p. 275) at the last the disciples' faith suffered an eclipse. We have only to put ourselves back into their situation to find it quite credible that the words of Jesus were forgotten amid the distress of his seeming defeat. (2) Equally extreme is the author's antiharmonistic prejudice. No doubt, harmonists have frequently strained the gospel narratives to show their agreement; but critics of the opposite school have been no less at fault in exaggerating the differences. This latter is what Professor Gould seems to us to do. To cite only a few instances

out of many: he positively affirms (p. 68) that Matthew puts in Passion Week the same denunciation of the Pharisees which Luke (11 : 37, etc.) assigns to an earlier occasion, and speaks of it as "a specimen of the disagreement of the evangelists in their attempts to give chronological sequence to their narratives." In the same connection he cites an unhappy suggestion of Dr. Gardiner, which few reasonable harmonists would follow, as an example of "the ingenuities and curiosities of harmonizing interpretation." Yet surely Christ may be supposed to have sometimes repeated himself, and he would be likely to do so, especially in the denunciation of specific and representative sins such as those of the Pharisees were; and, besides this, it is not improbable that Matthew intentionally enlarged his report in chap. 23 by material on the same subject spoken at other times. This, however, would give no occasion for Professor Gould's severe words. Again, when Matthew makes Jairus say that his daughter had just died, is it not hypercritical to charge the evangelist with "confounding this with the message brought later by members of his (Jairus') household"? Why should we not give the evangelist the credit of intentionally combining the two messages, since his narrative of the whole transaction shows his wish to be brief? It is most needless likewise to represent Matthew and Mark as inconsistent with Luke in their accounts of Christ's trial before the Sanhedrim (p. 283), and it is entire exaggeration to say (p. 87) that Matthew makes "the gathering of the multitudes about (Jesus) owing to the miracles accompanying the healing of Peter's mother-in-law" to have been "the *occasion*" of Christ's crossing the sea. Professor Gould on p. 84 admits that "the mark of time in Matthew is not definite enough to create positive disagreement." Yet on p. 102, *note*, he again assumes the contrary. In the same note is the remark that "Matthew connects the visit to Nazareth with the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, which Mark and Luke put at the beginning of the Galilean ministry, while Matthew, though connecting the two events as they do, puts them both at a late period." But surely the connection of the two events in Matthew is anything but obvious. One is narrated in 8 : 14, and the other in 13 : 53-58. 11 : 1 is of itself enough to separate them widely in Matthew's account, and they are equally remote in Mark. Professor Gould's idea, however, seems to be that, assuming the identity of Luke's visit to Nazareth with that of Matthew and Mark, some connection between that event and the early work in Capernaum floated dimly before the minds of the synoptists, but each arranged them differently; and this insubstantial theory is

made to reflect upon the credit of the evangelists. These examples are sufficient to illustrate the author's unwillingness to seek a reasonable harmony. Many allusions indicate that he thinks the fourth gospel also contradictory of the synoptics (*cf.* pp. 123, 124, 257, 258, 273, 277, 288, 291, 297, 298). He usually gives the preference to the latter, and appears to regard the historical matter in the fourth gospel as quite untrustworthy.

It would be interesting to examine in detail many special interpretations, but we have space to mention only a few. The Baptist's doubt, it is said (p. 10), "could have arisen probably only from the failure of Jesus to carry out the kingly part of the Jewish Messianic expectation;" but is not Christ's failure at the time to inaugurate the *judgment* upon Israel, which John had specially predicted, a better explanation of the doubt? The temptation narrative is explained (p. 14) as a "pictorial and concrete story of what really took place within the soul of Jesus;" yet, if the narrative be true at all, it must have come from Jesus himself. Did he purposely give it a pictorial form? The feast which followed the call of Levi is held to have been in the house of Jesus himself (p. 41). This of course implies that Luke misunderstood the earlier narrative, which is in itself improbable and by no means made necessary by Mark's language. Christ's teaching about the Sabbath is said (p. 50) to imply that "*man* can adapt it (*i. e.*, the Sabbath law) and set it aside and modify it, whenever it interferes with his good." This is surely a large inference to draw from Christ's assertion of the human purposes of the Sabbath law and of his own authority over it. The Davidic origin of Ps. 110 is denied (p. 236) emphatically, because "the idea of a personal Messiah belongs to the period succeeding the close of the canon," and Christ's reference to it as Davidic and inspired is explained by saying that "inspiration, which accounts for whatever extraordinary knowledge belonged to Jesus in his earthly life, does not extend to such matters of critical research as authorship." Here Jesus is supposed to have hung his argument on a false historical statement; for if the Jews had known enough to reply that David had never made such a statement, they would truly have silenced their questioner. The eschatological discourse is interpreted (pp. 240, etc.) as referring wholly to the destruction of Jerusalem and the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles. In Mark, this interpretation may be plausibly defended and it is well exhibited by Professor Gould; but the reports of Matthew and Luke do not seem consistent with that view.

Two chapters of the introduction call for special notice; since, in



our judgment, they constitute the least satisfactory portions of the volume :

One is the brief account (pp. ix-xii) given of the critical theory of the origin of the synoptics upon which the commentary is said to proceed. This is the "two-document" theory, now so widely prevalent, and which Professor Gould represents as no longer theory but ascertained fact. We think it extremely unfortunate that this theory should not have been adequately discussed and abundantly verified, since it is represented as the critical basis upon which all gospel study should proceed and as the particular view which this commentary seeks to introduce. Surely more than four pages of introduction and occasional notes in the commentary concerning the use of identical expressions, etc., by the evangelists, are required to give readers even an intelligent idea of what the theory is. The uninstructed student will gain from the book no clear idea of the question, and the instructed student will see that Professor Gould dismisses in his brief introduction, with a simple, unverified assertion, matters about which there is much difference of opinion and plenty of room for argument. We are surprised, too, to observe that in the course of the commentary so little attention is paid to the bearings of the *order of narrative* upon the theory in question; while the author's disposition to exaggerate the differences between the evangelists provides plenty of material by which the theory of their mutual dependence might be rebutted. No one will be convinced of the theory by Professor Gould's book, and the presentation of it can hardly be called "critical." The few instances of verbal agreement in the synoptics which are noted here and there, are quite as explicable on the theory of a common source for all three.

The chapter on "The Gospels in the Second Century" appears to us equally unsatisfactory. Its conclusion is that in that period our gospels were the main authorities for the life of Christ, though they were not considered "Scripture" and extra-canonical material was to a small extent used as equally reliable. We are quite willing to admit that items of extra-canonical information were received as true without hesitation. But we believe that Professor Gould gives a wrong impression as to the authority which was attached even then to our gospels, and that his account is marred by serious inaccuracies. Is it not proper to interpret less explicit evidence by that which is more explicit? If so, the clear testimony to the canonical authority of our gospels which is given by the writers of the close of the second century (*e. g.*, Irenæus) should govern our interpretation of the earlier

testimony. The known relation of Irenæus with Polycarp and his wide acquaintance with the churches and history of his time, make it incredible that the four gospels were not, as he states, received from the close of the apostolic age as the only authoritative reports of Christ's life and teaching. And then in sketching the earlier evidence omission should not have been made of the fact that pseudo-Barnabas cites Matthew as Scripture, nor that, as Justin testifies, the gospels were regularly read in the public service of the churches. Professor Gould is, to say the least, misleading in the apparently large use of uncanonical gospels which he attributes to Justin (p. xxxvii) and afterwards he practically retracts it (p. xl). On the other hand he is inaccurate in stating that Justin quotes no uncanonical sayings of our Lord. He does give two (*Dial.* 35, 47). Especially surprising also is the statement (p. xxxviii) that Papias quotes Mark 10: 38, 39. We wish that we could believe it; but the statement for which no proof is given, rests on a fragment of Georgius Hamartolos, a chronicler of the ninth century, published in 1862 by Nolte in the *Tübingen Theolog. Quartalschrift* (cf. Hilgenfeld in *Zeitsch. f. wissens. Theol.*, 1875), where Papias is said to have stated that St. John was slain by the Jews and the reference to and quotation from Mark which follow are doubtless from the pen of the chronicler and not from Papias. Moreover, how can it be said of the Muratori Fragment, which gives a list of books accepted by the section of the church which it represents, and confessedly enumerates only our four gospels, that "it becomes a witness to an acceptance of these *among the rest* as authoritative"? But we take particular exception to the statement (p. xl) that Marcion was the first to publish a New Testament canon. This view, though critics of the Ritschlian school support it, is without proof and is *a priori* improbable. The church fathers know nothing of it. The evidence both of the New Testament itself and of the earliest second century writers is against it. And the idea that a heretic should appeal to a written canon, if the idea of a written canon was not already established in the church, is almost preposterous.

We note in conclusion on p. 98 the misprint of לְשׁוֹם for לְשׁוֹם; on p. 100 *θόρυβον* translated "crowd" instead of "tumult;" on p. 142, in 8: 2, ἡδὲ omitted before ἡμέραι in the text; on p. 144 Magdala instead of Magadan as the true text of Matt. 15: 39 reads. The statement (p. 283) that Pilate had been procurator for three years when John the Baptist began his work is perhaps another indication of the author's rejection of the historical element in the fourth gospel,

unless he means to date Christ's death as late as 32 or 33 A. D. Pilate is sometimes called the sixth procurator, but, properly speaking, he was the fifth who formally held that office in Judæa.

PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

GEORGE T. PURVES.

**THE MESSIAH OF THE GOSPELS.** By CHARLES AUGUSTUS BRIGGS, D.D., Edward Robinson Professor of Biblical Theology in the Union Theological Seminary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1894. Pp. xv+337. \$2.

**THE MESSIAH OF THE APOSTLES.** By CHARLES AUGUSTUS BRIGGS, D.D., Edward Robinson Professor of Biblical Theology in the Union Theological Seminary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1895. Pp. xv+562. \$3.

THE three volumes of Professor Briggs on the biblical doctrine of the Messiah are the most important contribution of modern times to this inexhaustible subject. His plan is comprehensive and attractive. The first volume, published in 1886, has taken its place so far up towards the head of what has been written on Messianic Prophecy that no one who studies the subject can afford to ignore it. The second and third volumes of the proposed series are devoted to the Messiah of the New Testament. In his preface to the first of these the author says "that, guided by the teachings of Christ and his apostles, he has caught glimpses of the Christ of the throne and of the second advent, which he did not learn from his theological teachers or from the writings of his predecessors or contemporaries." In his preface to the *Messiah of the Apostles* he claims to have "done his best to turn away from the Christ of the theologians and of the creeds of the church, and to see the Messiah as he appeared to each writer in each separate writing." He has found that the diversity is great. "It is not always possible to combine the diverse representations in a higher unity." He thinks that "a craze for logical systems of Christology" is to blame for the fact "that we have so many different, unsatisfactory Christologies in the literature of the church."

In setting forth the Messiah of the gospels, our author's plan first gives an outline of the Messianic ideas of pre-Christian Judaism, especially as traceable in the book of Enoch, the Sibylline Oracles, and the Psalter of Solomon. The Messianic conceptions of the