

## New Testament Criticism.

### THE PRESENT STATE OF THE PROBLEMS.

BY ADA BRYSON, M.A.

IN England, since the time when the Cambridge triumvirate—Lightfoot, Westcott, and Hort—turned their attention to textual problems, there have been two great schools,—one using as their test the character of the evidence; the other, that of the quantity of the evidence. For the former, we have Westcott and Hort, followed by most of the textual scholars of to-day; for the other, Dean Burgon (whose work has been lately edited by Miller) is the champion. Dr. Scrivener inclines to Burgon, but declines to say more than that later MSS. are of some account when the older ones really vary. Westcott and Hort's text is the text that most students work with now, and it is the best to trust to. By a process of scientific reasoning they proved the Traditional text, on which the Authorized Version mostly rests, to be the result of a revision or process of revisions, in or about Antioch, in the fourth century. This they describe as the 'Syrian' text,—the earlier types being called respectively, 'Western,' 'Alexandrian,' and 'Neutral,'—and hold to be later in date than the others; in fact, the latest and least authoritative. Whether this 'Syrian' or 'Traditional' text is the oldest is scarcely disputed now. Most critics agree with Westcott and Hort. Within the last few years, however, there has been a feeling that Dr. Hort's preference for the readings of the two great MSS. Aleph and B to the exclusion of all other and better readings goes too far. Yet it is admitted by nearly all that these are our best MSS. The real point at present on which the critics are at issue is whether the Western text does not contain some considerable element of truth. On this point scholars differ. As the Western text and the text represented by Aleph and B (the neutral group) branched off in the second century, it is thought to be quite possible that the right reading may sometimes be preserved in the Western branch, and not in the neutral MSS. Another crux is the Syrian revision. Whether there was any formal revision is very uncertain; the text may have been gradually evolved through a series of revisional processes, but that this formal

revision could have taken place in the fourth century, and be unmentioned and unknown by the many Fathers who were flourishing and writing at that time, is very improbable. That this text was evolved in Syria in the fourth century seems, however, pretty certain. 'For,' as Dr. Kenyon says, 'even if we can find no historical reference to a revision, the critical reasons which indicated the separation of the Syrian text from the rest, and its inferiority in date, remain untouched. We still have the groups of authorities habitually found in conjunction; we still have the two facts that the readings of the group we have called Syrian are shown by their intrinsic character to be probably later than the non-Syrian; and that readings of the Syrian type are not found in any authorities earlier than about 250 A.D. Unless these facts can be controverted, the division into groups and the relative inferiority of the Syrian group must be considered to be established.' If Hort's statement that no purely Syrian readings are to be found in the Ante-Nicene Fathers can be disproved, his theory breaks down. But there are no present signs of this. Burgon and Miller rely a good deal on the early date of the Peshitta. This Syriac version is the oldest of all the authorities that belong to the Traditional group. If the Peshitta could be carried back beyond the date of the so-called Syrian revision, then this revision would be proved an invention. But this cannot be done yet; nothing has been found which carries our knowledge of the Peshitta farther back than the beginning of the fourth century. On the contrary, quite recently it has been suggested that the Lewis Codex and the Curetonian represent earlier stages in a long recension of the same Syriac version, of which the Peshitta is a late stage.

Of late years the character of the Western text as exemplified in Acts has especially engaged the attention of textual scholars. Increased importance is attached to this text. All critics agree that the Codex Bezae—the chief authority for the Western text—deviated from the primitive text; they differ as to the cause. The most striking

feature of this text of the Acts is the presence of a very large number of interpolations or glosses, or rather what must be regarded as such on the hypothesis that the current text does represent the original form of the Acts. Bornemann thought it represented the primitive text of Acts, of which the current text is only an imperfect and mutilated transcript. He was alone in this, until Dr. Blass put forward the latest view that the Bezan and the Received texts are two successive editions of the Acts put forth by Luke himself. This theory is admitted to provide a possible, but not positively probable, explanation of the difficulties. Although it is not yet generally accepted, the number of adherents is said to be steadily growing among scholars. Blass has made it clear that the Western text goes back to a Lukan original, differing in many respects from the Eastern text; but the point of dissension between him and Ramsay is that the latter thinks the Eastern text goes back to the same Lukan original, whereas Blass holds that both the texts are Lukan in their present form. Dr. Harris' theory of the Greek text having been adapted to the Latin, is also only admitted to be a possible explanation. And although it is proved that there was an old Syriac text of the Acts, it is denied that the text was much influenced by this old Syriac. The Syriac origin of the Bezan glosses is very questionable. It is admitted that the whole history of the text requires renewed and careful investigation. There is, however, a good deal to be said for Ramsay's view, that the glosses are by a diligent collector of local traditions, a Greek acquainted with the geography of Asia Minor.

Attempts to distinguish the 'Sources' of the Acts are now decreasing, and yet no sure results have been obtained. The conviction seems gaining ground that in the first part of this book the author did make use of sources,—probably some of them written. But as Ramsay affirms, and here is the crux, the author of the Acts was able to use these sources, and did use them, both skilfully and conscientiously. Baur's standpoint is now generally given up. The view of the Tübingen school was set forth in Baur's *Paulus*. They held that the Gospels and the Acts were literary compositions written with the purpose of inculcating the doctrine of the author's party, and claiming for his own ideas the sanction of the life of Christ. Baur, accepting the spurious literature of the second and

third centuries attributed to Clement of Rome and attacking St. Paul as Simon Magus, asserted that the Paulines and Anti-Paulines were bitter opponents: interior idealism was opposed to Judaic externalism. In four of St. Paul's Epistles—which alone are genuine—some symptoms can be interpreted as showing feelings of jealousy towards the older apostles, e.g. in Gal 2. There are none in the other nine, which are therefore denied to be genuine. The teaching of St. Paul seemed nearly obliterated at his death, and the Book of Revelation, written probably about 68–69 A.D., is the culmination of Judaic Christianity. In the second century efforts at reconciliation between the two parties began. It is from this time Baur dates the mediating writings, Acts, Epistles, and the 'so-called apostolic Gospels,' of which latter Mark is the most recent and the most suspicious. Pfleiderer, however, in his Hibbert Lectures takes Mark to be the oldest Gospel, and distinctly Pauline; Matthew is the reply to this of Jewish Christianity; Luke once more gives voice to Paulinism, though not the pure Paulinism of the apostolic age, and takes a conciliatory position between Matthew and Mark. The Acts, Baur thinks, is an apologetic essay by a Paulinian, planned to help the approach of the two parties by presenting to the readers a Petrine Paul and a Pauline Peter, and is a late second century work. In this book, especially, are to be seen the results of this work of reconciliation in actual process, e.g. the divergences between the narratives of the Jerusalem Conference as given in Acts 15 and Gal 2 are said to show the effort of the author of the Acts to efface the remembrance of the opposition which existed between Paul and the Twelve. In short, Baur's view is: If any book touched on points in the Acts, it was forged to suit the Acts; if it seemed to disagree with Acts, then it was spurious. If the diction is Pauline, it stands forth a proved imitation; if un-Pauline, then it could not have proceeded from the apostle.

Since Baur's time, however, we have had a gradual return to the traditional view. At that time critics took everything to be false unless proved true; now they are inclined to accept the tradition unless it is conclusively shown to be false. Harnack well remarked that during the first two centuries a simple practical letter issued in a false name would have been just as much an intentional forgery then as now. Baur admitted only Romans,

Galatians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians as indisputably genuine letters, but now 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon are generally admitted. Many critics admit Ephesians and Colossians also. Besides these, some have found genuine Pauline fragments embodied in Epistles which as a whole they rejected, such as Colossians and 2 Timothy.

In Romans, the question as to whom it was written, Gentiles or Jews, has again come to the front. Baur answers: To the Jewish majority in Rome; and this view is widely accepted. Weizsäcker, on the other hand, thinks it was addressed to a Gentile community. The question of the integrity of the Epistle is also raised. The best theory seems that advanced by Renan: that Paul wrote a circular letter with no personal allusions, simply a manifesto of doctrine. To this, different endings, were added to suit the various audiences; one copy was sent to Rome, another to the Ephesians and the Thessalonians, and still another to an unknown Church. He traces four distinct endings, which indicate four distinct Epistles. Lightfoot thought that Paul wrote the double greeting and then cut it away, intending to use the letter as a circulatory Epistle.

In 2 Corinthians some scholars have traced the supposed lost letters of Paul to the Corinthians. That referred to in 1 Co 9 would be preserved in 2 Co 6<sup>14-17</sup>, and the letter supposed to have been written between our first and second Epistles might be partially preserved in 2 Co 10-12. But all this hypothesis is extremely uncertain. It is not even generally admitted that there is a lost letter here.

For Galatians, Lightfoot is accepted in all except two instances. (1) He is probably wrong in the date he gives. Rendel proves, in the *Expositor* of 1894, that the letter was written before the Jerusalem Conference, and soon before a second visit to Galatia, about 52 A.D. Thus it will probably be the earliest of the now extant Epistles, earlier even than Thessalonians, which has hitherto been taken as the first. (2) Critics have now generally given in their allegiance to Ramsay's South Galatian theory. What are the Galatian churches? Are they those founded by Paul in South Galatia on the first missionary journey? or churches in North Galatia possibly founded by him on the second journey, but of which we have no account? Lightfoot took the latter view, and his opinion was challenged by Renan. Lightfoot

replied in a note to his Colossians, and all scholars bent to him. He thought the churches addressed were those in the chief cities of North Galatia—Ancyra, Pessinus, Tavium, etc. But he admitted the other view had much to recommend it. For we have a full account of the founding of the southern churches, and an exhaustive list of them. Also, we can explain the existence of the Jews on the great high road to the West; they would not probably have gone to North Galatia: an unsettled region out of the way of traffic. By their presence the progress of a Judaizing tendency among the Galatians is accounted for, such as the history describes among the Christians of Lycaonia and Pisidia. A few years ago Professor Ramsay came forward with proof that the Galatian district (Ac 16<sup>6</sup> 18<sup>23</sup>) denotes not the district popularly and generally known as Galatia, but the Roman province which bore that name. If we refuse to accept this theory, we have no hint of the evangelistic journey, and absolute silence on so important a work as the foundation of the churches of Galatia. Not only so, but all trace of any invitation to join the Jerusalem Fund given to the four southern churches disappears. They were the oldest and best established of them all, 'yet we are asked to believe that they were studiously ignored while the remote and little-known churches of North Galatia were associated with those of Greece and Asia.'

The Epistle to the Colossians is branded as spurious by the Tübingen school. Their real reason is that the letter will not fall in with the scheme of early Church history as drawn up by them. They think it was written by an adherent of the Pauline doctrine, but one who had developed this under the influence of Alexandrian ideas. Some think the writer of Ephesians revised this Epistle. Holtzmann and Pfleiderer do not regard it as Paul's in its present state, but believe it to contain a Pauline nucleus. Holtzmann has advanced an ingenious theory: that Paul wrote an Epistle to the Colossians; that, on the basis of this, a later writer wrote the Ephesians, and was so charmed with the result that he decided to give the original Epistle the benefit of it, and so produced our Epistle to the Colossians. This theory seems too ingenious to be trustworthy. It is said the Epistle presents so many developments in the Pauline doctrine, that it cannot have been written by St. Paul himself. But von Soden maintains that

there is nothing here that goes beyond the possibility of a legitimate development of doctrine in Paul. One might say the teachings are developed but not contradictory; there is nothing inconsistent with what has gone before. The alleged difficulties of language and style are not very significant, and present no serious difficulty. A more historical point is, whether the doctrines against which these teachings are aimed could have developed as early as this. This, as an historical question, should not be pushed too far. An earlier stage of what afterwards became gnosticism—simply then as now the question of the variance between good and evil, why evil should exist—was in the air and troubling the minds of men; and naturally the Colossians took up the question. There was gnosticism in the days of St. Paul as there is gnosticism now, though neither then nor now is it recognized under that specific name. The idea that the origin of these heretics is to be found in Phrygia is now generally given up. Lightfoot was probably wrong in saying there was any connexion between these Colossians and the Essenes. It is more likely that the Colossian heresy came from Alexandria than from Jewish deserts.

With the exception of the Pastoral Epistles, none has been so decidedly rejected as the letter to the Ephesians. Pfeiderer and Holtzmann date it second century, and take it as significant of the desire for union felt then. Renan, von Soden, Hatch, and Davidson all either think it of very doubtful authority or reject it altogether. Its external testimony is excellent: it is pretty certain that the Epistle was in existence before the end of the first century, about 95 A.D.; quite certainly it existed at the beginning of the second century, and by the middle of the second century it was certainly accepted as Pauline. The absence of all personal references is urged against it, as no Church had closer relations with Paul. Also, it is urged that the language and style are quite different from his other Epistles, and even from Colossians; that it contains peculiar words not found elsewhere; and that four or five of the words which are used have a very different sense in the early and undisputed Epistles. These are great difficulties, but not insuperable, and admit of explanation. The theory which is generally accepted now is that of Archbishop Ussher: that this is an encyclical letter sent to the Churches of Asia. There was a blank left purposely instead of the

words 'In Ephesus' in the original MS., copies were made for distribution, and the names of the Churches to which it was intended to be sent were duly filled in. This theory seems to offer the only feasible explanation.

Of later years the question of the destination of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been reopened. The problem is not yet solved. In fact, very little about this Epistle is certain. It seems clear it was addressed to a definite Society, and not to Hebrew Christians generally—probably in Palestine, where the priestly aspect of Judaism was dominant. It may have been to the Christians at Jerusalem, Alexandria, or Rome, or at some place unknown. It remains uncertain. The date is put by some shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, but others have put it later in the century. The place of writing and the writer are alike unknown. It is not clear that any among the earliest witnesses attributed the Greek text to Paul, though they thought it Pauline. Origen confessed 'God only knows' the author. The early Church thought it could not well have been written by Paul, as also did Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin at the Reformation. The names of Paul, Clement, Luke, Barnabas, and Apollos have been suggested for the authorship. Luther favoured the latter (Apollos), and this view was held also by Alford, but he is not mentioned as the author by any ancient authority. Barnabas seems the best hypothesis, and he is asserted to be the author by Tertullian. But perhaps it is the best policy to refuse to name anyone. Quite recently a new author for this Epistle has been advocated: the Apostle Peter. The whole question is discussed in *The Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews* by the Rev. A. Welch.

The Pastoral Epistles are rejected by all advanced critics, though portions of 2 Timothy are accepted by some. If Paul was not released from the imprisonment mentioned in Acts, they cannot be genuine, and it seems probable that he was not. The heresy attacked need not prove a late date, but the style is quite unique and un-Pauline. Their whole tone is different, and great doubt hangs over them, although Drs. Hort and Sanday accept them as genuine. In 2 Timothy are numerous personal details, and the external evidence for it is good, so some critics believe there is a Pauline nucleus in this letter. Of 1 Timothy Beyschlag says: 'The man who is now able to



ascribe it to the author of the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians has never comprehended the literary peculiarity and greatness of the apostle.' It is about these Catholic Epistles that present-day critics most disagree. The majority reject 2 Peter and Jude. Those scholars who accept James and 1 Peter as genuine, more and more agree in placing them at the beginning of Christian literature, before the Pauline Epistles.

The Synoptic problem—the most difficult of all—is not now much discussed, unless new matter is forthcoming. Increasing unanimity has been shown amongst German critics in favour of the 'Two Sources' hypothesis, which postulates (1) a narrative preserved by Mark in its most original form, and (2) a collection of the Sayings of Jesus.

There have been four hypotheses: (1) the hypothesis of mutual dependence; (2) that of oral tradition; (3) (a) that of an original document or documents or (β) the so-called 'Two Document Hypothesis.' The first of these, the 'Hypothesis of Griesbach,' is not much in favour now. Whilst accounting for the correspondences between the three Gospels, it does not account for their differences. The second, the 'Hypothesis of Gieseler'—still held by Lange, Alford, Westcott, Farrar, and Godet—postulates the oral tradition of the apostles and of the actions and discourses of Christ as the main source. So, without any preconceived plan, grew up an oral Gospel, from which the Synoptic Gospels were composed in the first century. Of course, 'at bottom, all the Gospels rest on oral tradition or anecdotal reminiscences,' as Holtzmann remarks. Several objections have been urged against this theory, viz. it cannot account for the similarities, even in phrases, which pervade the Gospels. Eye-witnesses of the same event invariably differ in their descriptions of it. There is a definite order followed, which is practically that of Mark, and it is not probable that this was formed in oral tradition. It is asked, Why are passages left out in Mark which are included in Matthew and Luke, if they were all in the oral tradition? And why, if the Gospel resulted from the preaching of the apostles in Judæa given fully as in John? It has been further pointed out that the specimens of the teaching of the apostles given us in Acts do not bear out the supposition that their teaching consisted almost entirely in the narratives of Christ's

life. The objections to this theory are so strong that it has been given up by most critics, and the third hypothesis is now prevalent. According to this, an original document or documents, probably Aramaic or Hebrew, which all three Gospels made use of, lies at the foundation. This theory has been gradually worked down into what is called the 'Two Document Theory.' One document is a narrative of events in Christ's life, the other a collection of His Sayings. This hypothesis is now most generally accepted, and is said to offer as complete a solution as we can attain to. It has been adopted by, among others, Weizsäcker, Holtzmann, Weiss, Wendt, Beyschlag, Pfeiderer, and Sanday. The first document may be identified with Mark, and this is supported by the statement of Papias, where he says: 'Mark having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, although not in order, whatever he remembered of the things said and done by Christ.' In this record of the preaching of Peter edited by Mark is the first of our fundamental documents, but whether this is Mark's Gospel as we now have it, or a previous document from which our Mark is derived, is still an open question. Concerning Matthew, Papias wrote: 'So then Matthew wrote the oracles (logia) in the Hebrew language.' Here is the second primary document. Evidently this could not have been our present Gospel. It was probably the logia collected by Matthew—hence called by his name—and edited and put into Greek with brief historical notices by some unknown person. It is further disputed whether our Matthew included parts of Mark. Probably Luke had access to Matthew.

A new book on the Synoptic problem is *New Testament Problems*, by Mr. A. Wright of Cambridge, the acknowledged greatest living advocate of the 'oral tradition' theory. He discusses some of the problems found in the Gospels and Acts, and throws interesting light on some difficult texts. Some of his theories, however, will not easily be accepted, e.g. he thinks the crucifixion should be dated 29 A.D., and the Gospel of Luke about 80 A.D. He also considers the theory of a one-year's ministry to be attractive.

The decided tendency that there is to give an earlier date to each of the New Testament books should be noted. This is seen in Professor Harnack's latest book, *The Chronology of the Early Christian Literature*. He redates the Gospels and

the Acts. He does the same for the Pauline Epistles, all of which he declares to be genuine except the Pastorals—though even of these he admits portions.

In the Gospel of St. Mark the last twelve verses are generally held not to be genuine. They were not probably composed specially for this place, but seem rather to be a fragment from some other writing roughly fitted on to the end of Mark, and are about as old as the first third of the second century. Why Mark's Gospel has come down to us incomplete is not yet solved. Mark may have been hindered from completing it, or a page of the autograph itself may have been lost. It remains a mystery.

The authorship of the Fourth Gospel is more discussed now, and this question is bound up with that of the first Epistle and the Apocalypse. The author of the first Epistle was almost certainly the author of the Gospel. The question of the Gospel really dates from the Tübingen school. The genuineness of the work is inconceivable from their standpoint: they stand or fall with the denial of its apostolic origin. It is the crown of all the mediating attempts of the second century, in their opinion, and further, the author of the anti-Pauline Apocalypse cannot possibly be the author of this anti-Jewish Gospel. But the discovery of the 'Commentary of Ephraem Syrus' on Tatian's 'Diatessaron' has helped to refute them, and they have been finally driven back from their position.

Critics are gradually coming nearer the Johannine authorship, but there is still much variance. Some deny altogether the Johannine authorship, others as decidedly assert it, and some think it was derived from John. Against it are alleged the differences between it and the Synoptics, and its special character as written by an unlearned Galilean fisherman. What most critics stumble at is, as Weizsäcker says, John's 'regarding his whole former experience as a life with the incarnate Logos of God.' Probably if the author was not John he had access to an independent tradition. This is confirmed by the hints in the Synoptists that the ministry was not exclusively Galilean. The question is a good deal mixed up with that of the Apocalypse. Are the Apocalypse and the Gospel both by John? Or, if only one, which one? Further, is the Apocalypse of composite authorship or not? And how has it reached its present form? These are some of the questions asked, and critics are now engaged on them, but there are no certain results yet. Pfleiderer, unlike Baur, who by admitting the Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse, drew from it his strongest argument against that of the Gospel, thought the Apocalypse was anti-Pauline, but that it was impossible to deny the Johannine origin of the Gospel, on account of its Christology, without on the same ground denying that of the Apocalypse. The Apocalypse presents the unusual spectacle of being put by the critics at an earlier date than has been claimed for it.

## Some Exegetical Studies.

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### The Sacred Art of Contemplation.

My last paper invited attention to the four great word-pictures for 'beholding' in the New Testament Greek. These are *κατοπτρίζεσθαι*, to behold in a mirror (2 Co 3<sup>18</sup>), *εποπτεύειν*, to behold as the initiated behold the greatest mysteries (2 P 1<sup>16</sup>, cf. 1 P 2<sup>12</sup>), *θεᾶσθαι* and *θεωρεῖν*, to behold as men do in the theatres or at the public games (Jn 1<sup>14</sup> and 17<sup>24</sup>). The first of these four words intimates the possibility of contemplation, and the other three reveal its chief features. I am now

to *postilize* concerning devout contemplation. Four conditions of it are suggested by these four passages.

1. *Clearness*.—We need a double clearness of the eye and of the object; we behold with face unveiled, and the object beheld lies in brilliant sunshine. Three words of the same family as the above-mentioned quaternion may help us in our study. The whole gospel is an apocalypse, a revelation. The word *ἀποκαλύπτειν* is simple