PROF. ALBERT RÉVILLE'S "JÉSUS DE NAZARETH."

If we wish in the first place to realize what are the aims and tendencies of this book by Prof. Albert Réville, who must be distinguished from M. Jean Réville, the author of *Origines de l'épiscopat* (Paris, 1896), we cannot do better than cull the following propositions from the conclusions of the last chapter of his book:—

"The legend of the miraculous birth is a homage paid to a holiness which appeared extraordinary. . . . The dogma of the divinity of Jesus Christ is the mythical way of expressing the penetration of human nature by the Spirit of God. . . . The dogma of redemption by the suffering and death of Christ is the mythical representation of the fact, which is proved by experience and illustrated by the greatest martyrs, that the progress and freedom of humanity are attained at the cost of suffering undergone by those who are its benefactors. . . . The dogma of original sin sums up in the persons of the first ancestors of our race, persons who are more mythical than real, what happens over and over again each time that a man is born into the world. . . ."

This to begin with; but to most readers of the Expositor it will be more interesting to note, and in some cases comment upon, the position which Prof. Réville takes up with reference to the various problems of the Gospel narratives, especially as we imagine he represents the furthest point to which the criticism of the New Testament has attained in France.[1]

We therefore pass by the first part of his two volumes, in which he deals with what we should call the preparation for the Gospel history, merely noting that there is a very interesting chapter on the Genesis of the Monotheism of the Israelites, at the end of which he is constrained to admit that he is not in a position to explain why the

[1] There are—an unusual feature in most French books of this class—a number of excellent maps at the end of the first volume, but they are, we observe, "made in Germany."

evolution of the monotheistic idea only took place amongst one people;[1] and that there is also an interesting discussion on the authenticity of the passage in Josephus[2] about our Lord, which he attempts to reconstruct. This brings us to the sources of the Gospel history as we have it now. With regard to the Synoptic Gospels as a whole, the position taken up in these volumes is very much the same as is most generally accepted at the present. He recognises four sources or documents:

(1) A collection of discourses as to the Kingdom of God, attributed to St. Matthew, and reproduced in the Gospel which bears his name; and also appearing, though in a more scattered and less complete form, in St. Luke's Gospel.[3] This is the most ancient of all the written documents (p. 306).

(2) A narrative of events from the baptism of St. John the Baptist gathered by St. Mark from the teaching of St. Peter, practically identical with the present St. Mark, and found also for the most part in St. Matthew and St. Luke.

(3) The first and third Gospels combine these two documents each in their own way, and St. Luke has in addition a further source, from which he derives in particular ix. 51–xviii. 14.

(4) The oral tradition from which each has selected for himself what suited his purpose. Some of this was already in writing, such as the genealogies, the history of the Infancy of Jesus, and perhaps of His temptation. These additions can most easily be distinguished in the first Gospel.[4] It would seem more natural to attribute such

[1] At the end of the first part there are two useful genealogical tables of the Maccabees and the Herods.

[2] *Antiq.*, 18. 3, 3.

[3] A list of these Logia is to be found in vol. i., pp. 469, 470.

[4] There seems to be no reasonable doubt that St. Paul was well acquainted with the oral tradition to which St. Luke alludes in his preface. See 1 Cor. xi. 2, 23–25; xv. 3–8; 2 Thess. ii. 15. Perhaps 2 Pet. ii. 21 refers to the

passages as St. Luke i., ii. to a separate source altogether, certainly a Judæo-Christian one, perhaps coming from *the* member of the Holy Family who alone could know the facts at first hand.

We now turn with Prof. Réville to the consideration of the Synoptic Gospels one by one:—

St. Matthew. With regard to the first Gospel, he shows conclusively that (1) the style of the book as we have it is the same from one end to the other;[1] (2) though written for Jewish Christians, the general tendency of its teaching caused it to be accepted as canonical, as it was so different from the Jewish uncanonical gospels; and (3) the Gospel bears traces of the symmetrical grouping by sevens, which appears so constantly in Jewish writings. He notes also the division into sections by the expression καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους,[2] as if too he there began to draw from another source. We reach more debatable ground in the consideration of the first two chapters.

St. Mark. In this Gospel, which is quite independent of St. Matthew as St. Matthew is of St. Mark, though both drawn from the same sources, we have practically an almost literal representation of the common source. It is the work of an historian of bare facts and narrative.

St. Luke. The distinctive mark of this Gospel is the lengthy passages derived from other sources. Otherwise the remainder is based upon the two sources of the other Synoptics, the Logia and the Proto-Mark. Prof. Réville constantly proclaims the Ebionite tendency of this Gospel: he does not seem to have realized that, in many passages,

same. The oral tradition certainly existed for some time side by side with the written Gospels.

[1] Vol. i., pp. 465–468.

[2] In two places the expression is somewhat altered, viz., xii. 46, xxiii. 1. The other passages are vii. 28, xi. 1, xiii. 53, xix. 1, xxvi. 1.

the other Gospels are more Ebionite, if we may use the term, than St. Luke.[1]

In conclusion, he assigns as an approximate time for the appearance of our present Gospels the years A.D. 98–117; the Logia he dates before A.D. 70; the Proto-Mark, A.D. 70–75.[2] We do not see any inherent necessity for allowing so long an interval between these latter dates and the former.

We pass on to the fourth Gospel, and here we think Prof. Réville has taken a decidedly retrograde step. He will have none of it as an authentic record. The Christ of the fourth Gospel is an idealized person. His exposition of its first verses is very unsatisfactory. "Le Logos *tendait* (ἦν) vers Dieu." "Tout ce qui est autre chose que la matière chaotique . . . doit son développement à l'action du Logos." "Afin que tous par lui arrivassent à la foi." These seem renderings or comments of a question-begging character. So too he drags in John ii. 4 as meaning that between our Lord and His Mother the natural bond between a mother and her son did not exist. He boldly asserts that the Christ of the Synoptics had no pre-existence, while the Christ of St. John clearly proclaims His pre-existence (vol. i. 342). He is only able to make this assertion by arbitrarily rejecting with Strauss St. Matthew xi. 27 (= St. Luke x. 22), a passage which, Dr. Sanday says, seems implicitly to contain that doctrine. The miracles and scenes peculiar to this Gospel are idealized and symbolic.[3] The Christ of the fourth Gospel is absolutely free from every bond connecting Him with the Judaism of His time

[1] Dr. Plummer in his new commentary on St. Luke constantly draws attention to this.

[2] Dr. Harnack, in his new volume on the chronology of early Christian literature, gives the following dates: Mark, A.D. 65–70 (probably); Matthew, A.D. 70–75 (except some later additions); Luke, A.D. 78–93.

[3] *E.g.* the woman of Samaria with her five husbands (iv. 18) represents Samaria with its five divinities! (2 Kings xvii. 29).

and the Jewish law. Yet, we may say, He constantly alludes to the Pentateuch, at the feast of the dedication He walks in the temple, He goes to Jerusalem for the Passover. Because He uses the expression "your law" (x. 34) and "their law" (xv. 25), the law is not His. Surely this is childish. Prof. Réville seems almost to exult in the difficulties about the day of the celebration of the final Passover, which no doubt are difficulties, but for his solution of them he does not give us sufficient reasons. How xii. 27 can in any sense be regarded as almost a calculated negation of the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, we fail to perceive. We have the troubled spirit, though for another cause, again mentioned in xiii. 21. He seems almost to wish to be able to assert that the fourth Evangelist intended to deny the reality of the sufferings of our Lord, and he assigns to that book an affinity with Gnosticism. Chapter xxi. is an addition by a warm admirer of St. John. The date of the book is nearer A.D. 140 than 130.[1] In a word, it is a Philonian, idealized story of the life of Christ. We cannot help thinking that Prof. Réville approached the consideration of this part of his subject as a foregone conclusion, biassed thereto by the particular view of our Lord's life and character which he wished to set forth; at any rate, he does not mention many of the arguments which have been adduced on the other side, many of them derived from internal evidence.

With practically one fourth of the materials which are generally recognised as the sources of our Lord's life gone or ignored, it is of course easy to make a very different portrait of the central figure of the narratives from that which can be drawn from the whole—and this apart from any of the difficulties of harmonization which, it must be admitted, occasionally occur. It is this portrait, as well as

[1] Harnack, whilst he refuses to assign the fourth Gospel to St. John the Apostle, yet dates it not later than A.D. 110 and not earlier than A.D. 80.

the comments upon the Gospel narrative, which we now propose to discuss.

The Nativity. Putting on one side the miraculous conception and the localization of our Lord's birth at Bethlehem, Prof. Réville asserts that the narratives of the first and third Evangelists are irreconcilable and mutually exclude one another. He of course makes much of the double genealogy, and almost makes merry over the dreams of the first two chapters and of Pilate's wife in the last chapter of Matthew; but this is not argument. He stumbles at the difficulty about finding a place in the narrative of St. Luke into which the coming of the wise men can be dovetailed, and does not apparently consider that the appearance of the star may have taken place some time before the nativity. The fact is that he assumes that each Evangelist must have written down all he knew of the history of our Lord's life and does not allow for their having made a selection suitable, each for his own purpose, in much the same way as St. Luke seems to have made his selections from the Logia. This would be sufficient to account for the absence from St. Luke of Joseph's hesitation as to whether he ought to put away his espoused wife. The passage common to all three Synoptics about the question our Lord asked, "How say the scribes that the Christ is the son of David?" is quoted to prove that our Lord looked upon the doctrine of the descent of the Messiah from David as an ill-founded and arbitrary one. The question, How is He his son? was surely asked in much the same spirit as the question about the baptism of John the Baptist asked only a short time before (Mark xi. 30). To have disputed the belief of the Davidic origin of the Messiah would have been to unite against Himself the whole Jewish community, who held to this belief as one implied throughout their Scriptures. The story about the descendants of David in the reign of Domitian surely could be used in exactly the opposite way to that in which

Réville uses it. The Davidic origin of our Lord is asserted not only implicitly in the Epistle to the Hebrews (vii. 14) which states that "our Lord hath sprung out of Judah," but also explicitly in the Epistle to the Romans (i. 3) where St. Paul says that He "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh." We do not remember any allusion to this latter statement, we could scarcely have expected one to the former, in these volumes. In fact the Davidic origin and the miraculous conception or something like it are assumed in the opening verses of what Prof. Réville looks upon as his oldest and best authority—St. Mark.[1]

It would take more space than we have at our disposal to discuss at length all the statements and opinions of Prof. Réville. For him the birth of our Lord took place at Nazareth. He considers that St. Mark asserts this by speaking of Nazareth as "His own country," and that the mistake arose in the following way. He suggests that there was some confusion between the Bethlehem of Judah and another Bethlehem, an obscure little village within the borders of the tribe of Zebulun (Josh. xix. 15), about six miles from Nazareth.[2] The census of Luke ii. 1 is irreconcilable with history.[3] If such had been ordered, the Jews of Egypt, of Syria, of Asia Minor, of Greece, and Italy, would have had to go to Judæa, the Roman colonists throughout the world would have had to go to Italy, all the strangers in Rome would have had to go to their own country or that of their ancestors. Surely this is mere trifling. There is not a grain of historical fact about the visit of the wise men. The first suggestion of it perhaps came from a Jewish legend about Nimrod. The carrying of Christ into Egypt is legendary: it is the expression of the fact that the Gospel was carried into Egypt from the

[1] See Mark i. 1, 11.
[2] It was perhaps the Bethlehem of Ibzan (Judges xii. 8).
[3] See however Plummer on the probability of such a census.

first years of the Apostolic age. It might almost be worth while to write down in short a life of Christ according to Réville, to show how he explains away almost the whole of the sacred narrative.

The Youth of Christ. Of the chapter on this subject we can say but little. When we consider that for the greater number of the years of His life our Lord lived what is often called "a hidden life," and that little or nothing is known about it, we may safely say that the thirty pages given to this subject owe much to the imagination of the writer. He describes not only what he conceives must have been the subjects of His meditations, but also the subjects of our Lord's perplexities. He puts back into the mind of our Lord as the object of His thoughts much of His later preaching. In this way he endeavours to depict something of the state of mind in which Jesus, we must not say the Messiah, was in when He came to the Jordan to receive baptism at the hands of the Baptist.[1] And this brings us to the end of his first volume.

The second begins with the baptism in the Jordan. In submitting to this our Lord took the final step towards committing Himself to His ministerial work, and did not allow the scruples which had hitherto made Him hesitate to do so any longer. We cannot ourselves discover any indication of this hesitation in the narrative. At the baptism itself he tells us that the voice from heaven was addressed to the bystanders, whilst in the fourth Gospel no mention is made of the baptism of our Lord at all, because it would be contrary to the author's theory of the Logos, and it is John the Baptist *alone* who sees the dove and hears the voice. We are rather led to assume that our

[1] About St. John the Baptist the following statements are made:—He founded a religious society which refused to join itself to the Christian Church. John did not recognise, still less proclaim, the Messiahship of Jesus. He was the proclaimer of the Kingdom of God, of the unknown Messiah, not the forerunner of Jesus Christ.

Lord was baptized when He was with the Baptist alone (Luke iii. 21). The incident of John's refusing at first to baptize our Lord is looked upon as improbable. Where were the signs to reveal the pre-eminence of Christ? Is it not a trace of the disputes between the Baptist's disciples and Jewish Christians? And did not the former argue that this baptism of Christ established the superiority of St. John over the son of Joseph? Where do we ever see our Lord anxious to carry out what are called works of righteousness? We almost think, if he had thought of it, Prof. Réville might have argued in exactly the opposite way thus.—This Johannine baptism marked a change of life and purpose. Our Lord came to this baptism to make an outward declaration that He was going to begin to lead a life different from what He had done before. As to the temptation we need only say that our author holds that the oral tradition has collected into this withdrawal into the desert the spiritual conflicts which took place in the soul of Jesus over and over again, before and during the course of His public ministry.

There is not much to be said on the two chapters which Prof. Réville entitles "The Gospel." Considering all that has been said and written about our Lord and the present pressing questions of social life, it is curious to find him saying that he should be tempted rather to believe that in reference to what we call social questions, Jesus had views that were not so clear as those upon matters which had more properly to do with the religious conscience.[1] Economical questions had no existence for Him. As to the miracles, inasmuch as he will have none of them as realities, it can scarcely be said to be worth while to discuss Prof. Réville's attempts at allegorising or explaining some

[1] In another passage (ii. 238) we find our author asserting that our Lord's teaching suffers from a narrowness of view due to His indifferent knowledge of the unavoidable conditions of social life.

of them. Some of them he feels unable to explain away, and so, for instance, when he comes to the raising of the widow's son at Nain, he says it is impossible even to conjecture what really took place. Further on he says that it would be waste of time to investigate the foundation and the details of the miraculous incidents which fill the Gospels. And here indeed is the point at issue. If there had been only a very few miracles recorded, it might have been possible to explain them away, but with so many, told so simply as they are, and without any straining after the marvellous, the difficulty surely is not to believe in them.

Of course Prof. Réville has his own way of treating the various subjects upon which our Lord lays down the law in no uncertain way. Our Lord's treatment of the question of divorce has nothing to do with the moral estimate we should form about marriage. Civil legislation takes account of the imperfections of society and relaxes the ideal law of marriage. If so, all we can say is so much the worse must be our opinion of society.

On the Messiahship of our Lord we have given us a complete theory which it would have been impossible to suggest without denying the authority of the fourth Gospel.[1] In accordance with it, our Lord had no conception or idea of a personal position for Himself at first. He came to preach the kingdom of heaven, to advocate a moral reformation. To do this He considered was more possible in Galilee than in the Holy City, because there was little or scarcely any sacerdotalism or ritualism there. But His efforts were opposed by the most religious of the Galilean population. He could not persuade them to see that Judaism had done its work, and that a new era was about to dawn. His personal pretensions were not great. Whosoever should speak against the Son of man, it might be forgiven him. Disheartened by His failures, He found it

[1] We need only refer to St. John i. to prove this statement.

necessary to take up a new position. To speak for or against the Kingdom He preached was to speak for or against Him. Yet at first this assumption of the dignity of Messiahship was not public; it was esoteric, limited to His familiars and friends. He drew the first proclamation from the mouth of St. Peter, but it was to be a secret at present.[1] But even then His idea of the Messiah was of one very different from the Messiah of the public opinion of His times. Distrust of self and extreme modesty prolonged His time of silence, and when He realized whither His teaching was leading Him, it made Him tremble. The title Son of Man did not imply necessarily His identification with the long-looked-for Messiah, though it might lend itself to it. At the same time, He wished that His disciples should arrive of themselves at this exaltation of His person, and they did arrive at it by considering that He fulfilled, or even surpassed, all that the Law and the Prophets predicted. Then came the announcement of the coming sufferings, but with it the assurance that, even if there were a brief delay, victory would be sure at last. There are some indications that from this time He begins to attempt to draw popular opinion to His side.[2] It was His own following that hailed His entry to Jerusalem. The city was indifferent, much to His surprise. His tentative appeal to its inhabitants to acknowledge in Him a Messiah with moral and pacific, and not political claims, was heeded but little. His purification of the temple must have met with almost general approval, though it made Him some enemies among the chief priests and in the Sanhedrim, though they did not venture to express it. Rumours grew and increased in the city of His being a pretender to the Messiahship. But He felt constrained to demolish the doctrine of the Davidic descent of the

[1] Matt. xvi. 16, 20.

[2] See for instance the parables of Matt. xxii. 2–14, Luke xvi. 16–24.

Messiah. This led to the question about the Messiah being David's son (Mark xii. 35), by which He endeavoured to overthrow that doctrine.

The apocalyptic teaching of this time ascribed to our Lord, cannot be His in its present form; it is affected and transformed in the Gospels by the influence of later teaching. To the last our Lord clung to the hope that circumstances might alter, and refused to throw Himself into the yawning gulf that seemed open before Him. He knew there must be treachery in His immediate following, though who the traitor might be He was not sure. So He took the precaution to withdraw from the city at night, when He might most easily be betrayed. It was only His anxiety to keep the Passover that kept Him from withdrawing into the desert again. The actual public proclamation of Himself as the Messiah was only wrung from Him at His trial by His declaration in Luke xxii. 69, linked as it is to the words of Daniel vii. 13.

We scarcely think that Prof. Réville will carry many of his readers along with him in his views about the Messiahship. It seems scarcely needful to quote passages to prove that all the Gospels are alike written to depict our Lord as the Messiah from the very beginning. We can scarcely imagine His followers accepting the full teaching of this doctrine only in the last days of His life. Moreover, the whole teaching of the early Church from the very day of the Ascension was built upon this foundation belief in Jesus as the Messiah and in His miraculous resurrection. If Prof. Réville's deductions are right, the whole edifice of the Christian Church is built upon a rotten foundation.

More space has already perhaps been occupied in dealing with this book than it deserves. With reference to the resurrection, on which the first preachers of the Gospel laid so much stress, we are told that the essential part of the Christian religion is the Gospel the living Jesus taught,

with its religious principles as He applied them in His own life, and that this does not depend upon the reality of a miracle to which a thousand objections can be made. This part of the work is the most unsatisfactory and the most obscure of all.

To sum up:—While there is much in these two volumes which gives us matter for reflection, yet we part from them irritated rather than disturbed. If this is the worst that can be said, it cannot affect any evenly balanced mind. The work lacks the attactions of poetry and imagination, which such a book as Rénan's *Vie de Jésus* had. It is prosaic in the extreme; and, if the author really accepts the portrait of the Saviour which he has drawn, he must in his heart form a somewhat low estimate of Him in many respects.

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RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO PAIN.

(REVELATION xxi. 4.)

ALL ages of the world have had some Utopian ideal—some state which they figured to themselves as the condition of ultimate blessedness. The Greek has his Elysian fields, the Spanish explorer his Eldorado, the Mohammedan his sensuous paradise. It is quite a subordinate matter where they have placed its locality—on the earth, in the sun, in the moon. That which makes the difference between one heaven and another is not the where, but the what. Man's paradise is not the *place* to which he is going, but the *state* to which he is going. The moral value of his heaven lies, not in whether he believes it to be up or down, beyond or here; it lies purely in his answer to the question, "What do you consider the goal of happiness?"

In this passage St. John gives us a description of the Utopian condition of human life; and, in relation to other