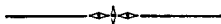


Redeemer, Fulfiller of the Promises, Crucified, Risen, and Coming, and a personage who, after all, thought about the Old Scriptures much, in essence, as "liberal" theology thinks now, or else, thinking as His age thought about them, was mistaken with a mistake that ran through His whole thinking and teaching, from the beginning to the end.

HANDLEY DUNELM.



ART. II.—LOISY'S SYNTHESIS OF CHRISTIANITY.

I.

MOST readers of the CHURCHMAN have heard something of Alfred Loisy, ex-Professor of Theology at Paris, whose works on the New Testament and its relation to Christianity were recently condemned by the Congregation of the Index. This proscribed literature comprises *Études Évangéliques*, *Le Quatrième Évangile*, and the little works entitled *L'Évangile et l'Église* and *Autour d'un petit Livre*. These two last have probably been widely read in England. We doubt if the same can be said of the second, a bulky work of 952 pages. The general aim of these books, if we consider them as a series, is constructive, and the tone is reverent throughout. The Abbé is a master of dialectic and a thoroughly competent scholar, and the conciseness of his system will, doubtless, attract many Romanists who are painfully aware of the difficulties of reconciling their Church's system of theology with the positions of modern science.

Yet it is scarcely surprising that these works have been authoritatively condemned and that the experiences of the late Professor St. John Mivart seem likely to be repeated in the Abbé's case. Nor, if there is to be such an institution as the "Index," can we regret that it brands a synthesis of Christianity, which, however well intended, lightly deprives our faith of a precious heritage, and gives only a most unsubstantiated theory in return. An ecclesiastic who treats the Fourth Gospel on the lines of Strauss, as worthless for the realization of the historical Jesus, and who arbitrarily rejects the genuineness of all synoptic texts that do not square with this method, as little commends himself to pious Romanists as to ourselves, despite his apparent vindication of the high claims of ecclesiasticism. The Congregation probably perceived that even Papal infallibility may be purchased at too great a cost. It might be possible to defend the pretensions

of the Papacy on the "evolutionary" lines laid down in Loisy's two smaller books, defective though they are in their purview of the first six centuries, when (as I shall show hereafter) Rome really played but a minor part in the evolution of Catholic dogma. But for Christians generally there are elements of historicity in the Gospel story itself which cannot be elided without offence to the spiritual instinct. To attempt to vindicate the authority of the Church of later times by sacrificing St. John's Gospel and Christ's own assertion of His Divinity is a dangerous policy indeed.

There was, no doubt, a process of increasing realization of the doctrine of the Saviour's Godhead in the Apostolic Age, even as in the Age of Councils there was that process of closer definition by means of dogmas which is described by Loisy in *Autour, etc.*, pp. 127-129. But St. Paul's purely personal experiences and claim to inspiration cannot take the place of the history of the Saviour's public ministry. Moreover, it is undeniable that it was primarily that very element in Scripture that Loisy impugns which lay at the base of Athanasius' "Homousios" and all the subsequent dogmatic statements of the Councils. Again and again in the "Orationes" and "De Synodis" Athanasius assumes that the Fourth Gospel was written by St. John, and there are continual allusions to the Johannine presentation of our Lord's discourses as historical. And such was the attitude of all who took part in these controversies. But on Loisy's showing they were only following a bad lead. The error of the prior age deceived them in these matters. If the Church thus early erred on such important points, how can we claim for it peculiar guidance in crediting Paul's visions or in promulgating the doctrine of Christ's Divinity at all? This seems a poor way of establishing a continuous inspired "evolution" of dogma by the agency of the Church.

It is really thus that Loisy attempts to construct his Christology. The theologians of the past may have conceived of a Jesus "ayant conscience d'être Dieu." But this is because they regarded the Fourth Gospel as historical and the words of Matt. xi. 27 (Lk. x. 22), xxiv. 31, xxviii. 18-20, as genuine utterances of Christ, and did not regard "les recits de l'enfance," with which Matthew and Luke begin, as "en dehors de la christologie de St. Paul." The real history of the matter reads thus: "La divinité du Christ est un dogma qui a grandi dans la conscience chrétienne, mais qui n'avait pas été expressément formulé dans l'Évangile." "Jesus lui-même a vécu sur la terre dans la conscience de son humanité."¹ His Divinity was only realized by the inspired consciousness

¹ "Autour, etc.," pp. 116, 117.

of the Catholic Church, mainly through the teachings of St. Paul.¹ Why St. Paul is not, therefore, to occupy the place assigned by Rome to St. Peter is not apparent. Loisy contents himself with saying that both were at Rome, "mais quel que fût le prestige de Paul celui du prince des apôtres est demeuré plus grand dans le souvenir traditionnel."²

This kind of reasoning is the more strange in that Loisy, in his letter, "Sur la fondation et l'autorité de l'Église," is ready to give away the Gospel texts usually cited on behalf of ecclesiasticism itself. We are told, "Il importe assez peu que telle ou telle parole concernant l'Église puisse être considérée comme réellement dite par le Sauveur, ou comme une interprétation du rapport que la foi primitive a perçu entre l'Église et Jésus, car l'institution divine de l'Église se fonde sur la divinité du Christ, laquelle n'est pas un fait d'histoire mais une donnée du foi dont l'Église est témoin."³ We seem here to be wandering in a circle. If the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ was the foundation of the Church, how can it be a mere result of ecclesiastical evolution?

The fundamental error in Loisy's method I take to be this: The law of evolution may serve us in a general survey of the adaptation of Christianity to human need and extended knowledge, but cannot apply to the fundamentals of Christian faith. If all Christians are agreed that in respect of inspiration and devotion to God the Apostolic period was the best equipped, it is plain that evolution does not play the same part in the Church's history as in that of a natural organism. Were Loisy's principle really thus applicable, the reverence we feel for the age that witnessed Christ's teaching and received the charismata of the Holy Spirit should necessarily be transferred to modern times. The honour hitherto paid to Apostolic Epistles should be transferred by the Romanist to the latest Papal syllabus as the climax of inspired evolution. No ultramontane Romanist is probably tempted to thus reverse the usual attitude. Indeed, few probably accept the infallibility dogma of 1870, which in Loisy's system is the climax of evolution, otherwise than as the best working principle for the conduct of ecclesiastical affairs. That even thus considered it is not unassailable is plain from Loisy's naïve admissions in his last volume: "Il n'en prête pas moins facilement à de graves inconvénients; oppression des individus, obstacle au mouvement scientifique et à toutes les formes du travail libre qui est le principal agent du progrès humain."⁴

¹ "L'Év. et l'Égl.," p. 172.

³ "Autour, etc.," p. 162.

² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

Indeed, as we reflect further we can scarcely fail to see that Loisy's own synthesis of the Christian development is itself a contradiction to the regulative principle which should underlie it. We are seeking Christianity evolved under the guidance of *Rome*. But this high ecclesiastic readily accepts the most destructive inferences which Protestant exegetes have reached in the department of Biblical criticism, and is equally unfettered in his treatment of history. So far from belonging to the old school of Apologists who contended on behalf of the "Forged Decretals," he seems to suspect (with "des critiques non-catholiques"),¹ that the celebrated texts, Matt. xvi. 18, John xxi. 15-17, to which Rome has always appealed, were never actually spoken by Jesus, but were only an expression of later ecclesiastical sentiment, "en vue de la situation prépondérante que l'Église romaine occupait déjà."² He knows that presbyteral, not episcopal, government was the primitive rule. He deals with the Scriptures quite untrammelled by all that Rome has decreed about the limits of the Old Testament canon or the binding authority of the Vulgate.³ Surely "the voice is Jacob's, but the hands are the hands of Esau." For whence comes this knowledge and this assumption of liberty? Always from sources that have been at variance with the Papal chair. His thesis is that Rome has reigned supreme throughout the course of Christian evolution; but his method of establishing it is largely a demand that centuries after Protestantism has worked on certain critical methods the Roman system shall prove itself elastic enough to accept them. From the Protestant side the retort is obvious: What is the good of an ecclesiastical guide that only throws light on the path already traversed? Rome condemned these discoveries at first. Indeed, it condemns M. Loisy now. The more the Abbé is right, the more Rome is wrong.

Loisy is compelled to admit that, "sauf Newman," no Roman theologian has construed Christian doctrine thus by the light of evolutionary theory. His works are, in fact, an extension of a principle, invoked by Newman for controversial purposes, to lengths at which that great ecclesiastic would have shuddered. Newman's principle of development was not applied to essential truths, such as our Lord's teaching His own Divinity. Much of what Loisy claims in regard to the "relativity" of dogma to the knowledge and social surroundings of the age is commonplace to the Anglican or Protestant theologian. But Rome cannot "have it both ways."

¹ "Autour, etc.," p. 174.

² *Ibid.*

³ It is doubtless a mere slip that he renders the *μετανοεΐν* of the Baptist by "Faites pénitence" in "L'Év. et L'Égl.," p. 38.

Evolution is one thing, St. Vincent's principle—"Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus"—quite another. For traversing the latter in far less drastic fashion than Loisy Rome has sentenced countless persons to severe penalties. If the destructive higher criticism of to-day be right, the teachings of sixteenth-century Protestantism were most unjustly censured at Trent, and "l'idée de l'infallibilité doctrinale" is once again belied by actual facts.

These considerations may perhaps have weighed with the "Congregation of the Index," which, however, doubtless realized, as we do, that the head and front of Loisy's offence is his denying Christ's historical presentation of His Divinity. I pass on to notice that in certain liberal Roman circles the condemnation of these books has been deemed an act of unjustifiable oppression. How far Loisy's method has gained ground in such quarters, and how attractive this curious medley of Ultramontanism and Protestant negation is where the maxim of proving all things before holding that which is good is unfamiliar, may be illustrated by a curious article in February's *Contemporary Review*, over the signature "Voces Catholicæ." The ex-Professor of Paris is in this article credited with "modest statements . . . which, in their broad outline, are as firmly established as those of Galileo." His condemnation is taken to imply that "the Catholic's intellectual pabulum for evermore will consist of the mouldy biscuit of medieval speculation." Loisy's treatment of Christianity is held as justifiable as his acceptance of scientific facts in his "Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament." We are told how he was deprived of his professorship at Paris "for stating quietly the most obvious truths about Genesis in relation to chronology, and about the unequal historicity of the Pentateuch," and for saying that "even the books of the New Testament were edited on lines much more free than those of modern historiography." The article proceeds to illustrate the consistency of Roman verdicts with cruel candour, by the light of the varying Papal estimates of Erasmus, and of Jeanne d'Arc's transfer from the position of a heretic condemned by a competent ecclesiastical commission to the ranks of the beatified.

Such eulogies are explainable by the fact that the whole plane of thought in which criticism and exegesis move with us is to the ordinary Romanist quite unfamiliar, and that its limitations are consequently unrealized. The attitude of Roman theology to advancing science is cramped by postulates and decrees from which we have fortunately escaped. Galileo himself can scarcely be said to have received the *amende honorable* now offered to the shade of Jeanne d'Arc. Is it impolite to suggest that in its appropriating the method of

free scholarly exegesis familiar in the Reformed Churches, Romanism is necessarily too unacquainted with the agency to comprehend its restrictions? The baby, on first experimenting with its eyes, reaches for the moon in its inability to distinguish degrees of distance. The unstinted encomium expressed by *Voces Catholicæ* reminds one of Dr. Johnson's ungalant comment on the phenomenon of a woman preacher: "Sir," said the sage, "we do not expect to see it done well; but we are surprised to see it done at all."

We wish well to the liberal Roman school, and trust that some method may be found to remove certain of its trammels. Greater freedom will doubtless give it a more just sense of perspective. But at present it bids fair to run riot. It is one thing to protest against the retention in theological manuals of "la création du monde quatre mille ans avant Jésus Christ, la longévité des patriarches, l'historicité du déluge, la confusion des langues."¹ It is quite another to argue that our Lord's claim when on earth to the Divine attributes must be unhistorical, that the Fourth Gospel is as ideal as the Dialogues of Plato, that it is merely "une interprétation heureuse de la tradition historique représentée par les Synoptiques et de la tradition théologique inaugurée par saint Paul."² So far from such a solution of the Johannine problem being necessary, or "firmly established," or even largely accepted by qualified scholars, the historical character of the Fourth Gospel seems far more firmly established in England than it was some years ago. This result is largely due to the writings of Bishop Westcott and Professor Sanday. There is but a single reference to the latter in the 199 pages which serve as an introduction to *Le Quatrième Évangile*, and the real arguments for the historical standpoint are ignored. The presentation of the evidences of authorship is as one-sided as it can be.

Personally, I can testify that, after trying to apply the method of *Le Quatrième Évangile* to the Gospel of St. John, I find the difficulties of the Johannine problem immeasurably increased thereby. That much of the conversation in that Gospel is in the author's own diction, that he sometimes shows a predilection for allegory, and that he writes with dogmatic aim to emphasize the Saviour's (doubtless rare) presentation of His Divine Nature, we admit. Nor, from the historical standpoint, can it be denied that there are many and great difficulties in squaring the Johannine chronology with that of the Synoptic record. But how does the case stand when we regard this Gospel as an ideal, wherein fictitious characters

¹ "Autour, etc.," p. 209.

² "Le Q. Évang.," p. 53.

play their part in imaginary scenes, and a non-historical Jesus propounds the Christology of a later time in a ministry arbitrarily extended from one year to three years and a half? Can we suppose that the early Christians were so indifferent to the facts of their Master's life, and those of His Apostles and friends, that they would tolerate the elaborate trifling of which I now give a few illustrations?

Let the reader, then, try to conceive an imaginary brother Lazarus tacked on to the real historical persons Mary and Martha of Bethany, given a symbolic name, and made to die and be restored by Jesus in order to illustrate the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection!¹

Let him substitute for the detailed narrative of Christ's appearance to the sceptical Thomas a typical figure ("Thomas étant le doute personifié"²), which performs a part in a scene which, if unreal, is an eternal aspersion on the Apostle's memory! When he reads of Philip and Andrew introducing certain "Greeks" to Jesus at the last Passover, he is to suppose that the writer intends to present a "rencontre tout idéale" which "fournit un prétexte pour développer l'économie du salut porté aux Gentils," and that these two Apostles are put into this piece of fiction "parce que leurs noms étaient en autorité dans le milieu ou notre Évangile fut écrit."³ When we are told of the brethren of Jesus urging Him to go up to the Feast of Tabernacles, and read the remarkable comment, "for neither did His brethren believe on Him," we are to suppose ourselves presented with a merely ideal portrait of "manque de foi."⁴ (I remark here that the "brethren of the Lord" were noted men, who certainly afterwards did believe, and of whose lack of faith we are not plainly told elsewhere. How dared this idealist invent a scene so much to their disparagement?)

When we read of Nathanael summoned from "under a fig-tree," can we believe that the writer has imagined an interview between Philip and that "véritable israélite" St. Paul (!), and that the "fig-tree" is selected "pour figurer l'économie de la Loi ancienne," and that all this has never been understood till now?⁵ Can we believe that the remarkable episodes peculiar to this Gospel in the narrative of the Last Supper are ideals which an unknown writer thought proper to obtrude into a scene where, if anywhere, the Christian memory would cling jealously to actual fact? Can we accept it that the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet is deliberate fiction,

¹ "Le Q. Évang.," p. 634.

² *Ibid.*, p. 918.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 633-685.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 489.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 257, 258.

and the part Peter plays imaginary, and that the writer is merely intending to press the necessity of Holy Baptism and the Eucharist?¹ Or that the indication of the traitor to the beloved disciple leaning on Jesus' bosom was meant by the writer (who is not himself St. John) to teach us "que la doctrine johannique l'emporte en quelque façon sur la tradition proprement apostolique et qu'elle l'a enrichie"?²

Or that the demands of Thomas and Philip in xiv. 1-9 as to Christ's going away, and "the Father," are, again, mere liberties taken with noted Apostles' names, Thomas again (why Thomas rather than Philip?) being "type de la demi-foi qui exige des preuves palpables"?³

But perhaps the most offensive working out of Loisy's method is in that most solemn scene where the mother at the foot of the Cross is committed to the care of the beloved disciple. Of course, Mary could not have been there, as she is not mentioned in the Synoptic account. "Le Christ l'appelle 'femme' parce que son personnage est symbolique" [yet in ii. 4 Loisy admits that the mother idealized is addressed in the same way] "et ne doit pas se confondre avec le personnage historique de Marie mère de Jésus." What is meant is that converted Judaism ought to regard Hellenistic Christianity as the true son of the Old Covenant, and that the latter should welcome as a mother the Old Testament tradition. In fact, it is a transposition and re-adaptation of the Synoptic story of Jesus indicating as His mother and brethren those who "hear the Word of God and keep it."⁴

Such is the Fourth Gospel according to Loisy, and we are not surprised that he postulates that it was intended only for circulation in a limited circle by its unknown author.⁵ For surely the offence against the characters whom this wild prosopopœia introduces on its pages is plain and palpable. If we set the book within the period of their lives, it was an insult to their actual experiences. If we set it later, it would have affronted the Church's recognition of them among the blessed dead. But the Christians, we are to suppose, were not offended by this wild distribution of sacred personages in purely fictitious scenes. They palliated, too, the pretended touches of an eye-witness that are familiar to us in the Fourth

¹ "Le Q. Évang.," pp. 712, 713.

² Loisy remarks that Peter's place at the supper in this fictitious episode is intentionally not given: "Il aurait dû avoir celle qui est prise par le disciple bien-aimé; l'évangéliste n'ose pas lui assigner une place inférieure" ("Le Q. Évang.," p. 726).

³ "Le Q. Évang.," p. 745.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 878-880.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Gospel. They permitted an obscure allegorist, who had only at best a second-hand acquaintance with his subject, to pretend that he was acquainted with the thoughts and motives of Jesus on divers occasions in His earthly ministry (*cf.* John ii. 24, 25, iv. 1, v. 6, vii. 1-6, xiii. 1, *et seq.*), and to attribute to Jesus lengthy speeches of sublime character in purely imaginary surroundings.¹

Not only was all this tolerated, but the fiction "caught on," and somehow the Church learnt to deceive herself with the notion that this *prosopopœia* was meant for history. Reverence for Christ's actual biography and those of His Apostles, revered family recollections and traditions, and the growing respect for those who were deemed saints, availed nothing. On the other hand, that the writer certainly does identify himself with the beloved disciple John (a point which Loisy evades) was generally recognised. So it is we have the swelling voice of testimony which results at the end of the second century in the universal acceptance of a historical Gospel of St. John. And so it is that the Logos doctrine establishes itself in the Church.

It is not my purpose to write a defence of St. John's Gospel. This has been done by far abler hands, and anyone who has any doubts on the evidences, external or internal, will, I think, find satisfaction in Dr. Reynolds' excellent article on the subject in Hastings' Dictionary. My object is to present M. Loisy's method. How far it commends itself to his adversary, Professor Harnack, who also discards the Fourth Gospel, remarking that "the author acted with sovereign freedom, transposed events and put them in a strange light, and illustrated great thoughts by imaginary situations,"² I have not yet learnt. But if this be the interpretation of the Johannine problem, I think most of us will say that the early Christians lived in such an utter indifference to the distinction between dreams and facts, biography and *prosopopœia*, that it is scarcely worth while investigating the historical origins of our religion. In my next papers I shall try to deal more

¹ The absurdity of this "*prosopopœia*" theory is perhaps most apparent if we take the passage John x. 34-36. The writer is *ex hypothesi* aiming to represent Jesus declaring His Divinity. But here he represents Jesus as speaking in words which have often been made use of by opponents of that doctrine, and which on the ordinary view are not without difficulties. Why such a damaging scene is conjured up I cannot understand from Loisy's commentary. But, of course, for him "Il est de toute évidence que le Christ historique n'a jamais discuté ainsi sur sa divinité de sa personne avec les pharisiens."

² "Das Wesen des Christentums," Lect. III.

generally and from other points of view with Loisy's synthesis of Christianity, and shall compare it with the familiar rival scheme propounded by Harnack.

ARTHUR C. JENNINGS.

ART. III.—THE BOOK OF GENESIS (*continued*).

THE next point which comes before us for consideration in dealing with our subject is

THE CHRONOLOGY OF GENESIS,

and the first question to be treated is, "Are the sources of the author's information consistent with one another, or are they not?" The "Higher Critic" says not. It is therefore necessary to examine the passages upon which he relies for the establishment of his position. The passages cited must be taken one by one and examined. This is a tiresome work, but it is the only way in which the assertion can be tested.

1. xii. 11: It is objected that Abram could not have called his wife "a fair woman to look upon" (J) when she was sixty-five years of age (P; deduced from a comparison of xii. 4 with xvii. 17. We scarcely think, though considerable stress is laid upon it in the commentary, that this objection should be taken seriously. If it stood by itself it certainly would be held to be of little avail, and therefore, if we can be considered to have satisfactorily disposed of the other counts in the indictment, the question of the possibility of personal beauty in a woman at a particular age can be safely treated as a negligible quantity.

2. xxi. 15: It is objected in this case that, when we are told that Hagar "cast" Ishmael under a shrub in the desert, the word implies that she was carrying him, and that this was a physical impossibility, as he was at least fifteen years old. To begin with, supposing Hagar was carrying him, it does not follow that she had carried him for any long distance, and it is within the experience of some of us what physical strength women are sometimes endowed with in times of stress. But, further, the word "cast" does not "clearly imply" a carrying of the boy. Joseph's brothers did not carry him to the pit into which they cast him (xxxvii. 24; the Hebrew word is the same). It is just as easy to assume that Hagar supported her fainting boy for some little distance and then made him lie down under a shrub whilst she went a little way off as it is to assume that she was carrying him.