

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 25—January, 1896.

I.

THE BEGINNING AND GROWTH OF THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

OUR LORD and His apostles were accustomed to refer to the Jewish Scriptures as to a well-known, definite body of sacred writings that had been handed down from past ages. They assumed that there was agreement among the people of the Jews as to the particular books that constituted these Scriptures; and they actually quoted from the great majority of them as of unquestionable authority in matters of doctrine and duty. It could not occur to any reader of the New Testament that in the time of Christ the Canon of the Old Testament had not yet been determined, or that it was still an open question whether certain books should be received into it, or should be excluded from it. It is inconceivable, too, that Josephus could have written as he has done of the books which he describes as "justly believed to be divine" and held to be most sacred by all Jews,* if the rabbis of his time had felt themselves at liberty to add to, or to take away from the number of these sacred books. When Strack wrote his article on the Canon of the Old Testament,† he could affirm that there was then unanimity among critics of opposite schools in regarding the Canon of Josephus as embracing neither more nor less than the thirty-nine books of our present Hebrew Bible. He attached no importance, as bearing on the extent of the Canon, to the discussions which rabbis of the first century engaged in with respect to

* *Contra Apion*, i, 8.

† Herzog's *Real-Encyk.*, 2d ed., vii, p. 428.

of the problems of Biblical psychology good sense as well as acumen, a fine restraint along with a thorough exegetical equipment. We do not entirely accord with Dr. Laidlaw in his determination of the fundamental point of the meaning of the word "spirit" as applied to man, and its relations to "soul." We think that while he has made an immense advance on those who bring their own philosophical distinctions to the determination of the Biblical usage, he relies too exclusively on dogmatico-historical considerations, and would have come to a slightly different result had he allowed sufficient weight to the philological groundwork of the usages of the words. But we have reread the work in this new edition with a constant sense of satisfaction, and we close it with a feeling of deep gratitude to the author. It is the best book on its subject and deserves a wide circulation.—*Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation*. By Charles Gore, M.A., Canon of Westminster, of the Community of the Resurrection, Radley. 8vo, pp. xvi, 323. (London: John Murray; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895.) In this goodly and beautifully manufactured volume, Canon Gore, though with some changes in the subjects treated, fulfills the promise he made to the readers of his Bampton Lectures on *The Incarnation*, to follow that volume with a series of dissertations on related subjects. Three interesting essays are here given us, full of the author's wide learning and persuasive modes of presentation. The first, which has been rendered in a measure necessary by recent discussion, treats of "The Virgin Birth of our Lord," in a manner which brings all the elements of the problem fairly before the reader but does not impress him as especially thoroughgoing or profound. The last essay traces in a very satisfactory manner the growth of the doctrine of Transubstantiation in the mediæval Church, and seeks to connect its vogue and final triumph with the prevalence of Nihilistic views as to the person of Christ. In the course of this discussion Canon Gore commits himself with some enthusiasm to a doubtful principle drawn from Leontius of Byzantium, whom he calls, justly, the "best theologian of the sixth century." In distinguishing between the natural, unnatural and supernatural, Leontius finds the characteristic of the supernatural in this: that "it does not destroy the natural, but educes and stimulates it both to do its own work and to acquire the power for what is above it." This is a fairly good definition of the supernatural in the sphere of the *potentia ordinata*: but Canon Gore seizes it as "a great principle which runs through all theology" and seeks to use it in the form that "the supernatural does not annihilate or supersede the natural," as a test of truth in every sphere of theological thought. It does not seem to us necessary, however, to adopt a principle which will deny all miracles properly so called, in order to discredit the false miracle of transubstantiation. The supernatural is not always simply the natural by God's power working beyond itself: it is sometimes God working immediately and not through second causes, and it therefore sometimes does supersede the natural. The question at issue with transubstantiation is not that of the general supernatural, and it is a serious evil to allow it to be confused with that. The central essay in the volume is, however, by far the most important and it is treated both more copiously and more thoroughly than the others. Its topic is "The Consciousness of Our Lord in His Mortal Life:" and it canvasses in turn the Biblical data, the history of Christian opinion on the subject, and the propriety and rationality of the conclusion reached. A vast body of material is passed under review; and the collection of opinions on the subject is especially well done and supplies a concise *conspectus* which is very welcome. Despite, however, the diligence and thoughtfulness with which it has been wrought out, the paper is essentially unsatisfactory. And this before all else because it is not properly

speaking an investigation, but has proceeded from the beginning on a foregone conclusion. The philosophical principle that a really human experience is possible only under the conditions of a single limited consciousness (pp. 87, 89) is assumed from the first. A *petitio principii* vitiates the whole essay therefore from the beginning. The survey of the Biblical material is undertaken under its influence, and every proof of the presence of a limited human consciousness in the man Christ Jesus is treated as excluding the presence in Him of an unlimited divine consciousness. Thus the old Church doctrine of the *gemina mens* and consequent double consciousness, is never given an opportunity to assert itself and take over to itself the explanation of the double set of facts which, when fully and equably stated, it will be readily seen that it alone is capable of explaining. Under the influence of this foregone conclusion, Canon Gore has not even been able to give an equable place to the facts indicative of a divine consciousness in Christ. The treatment of the Biblical material becomes thus distinctly one-sided and has too much the appearance of special pleading. The conclusion at which he thus arrives, is the postulation for our Lord of a *kenosis* of the type of that advocated by Martensen and Ebrard, with only the correction that Canon Gore continues to believe in the presence of a human soul in the person of Christ, along with the relatively depotentiated Logos. It does not stagger him that he thus reaches a conception far more difficult rationally to conceive than the Church doctrine of the *gemina mens*. In order to escape conceiving a double consciousness in one person confessedly including within the unity of His person two minds, he posits a double consciousness in the unity of the single Mind which the Logos confessedly is. It does not help matters to smooth over the difficulty—nay the impossibility—of this conception, by a vague “in some manner” (p. 93), or by an admission (p. 216) that it is “beyond the power of human conception.” If it is in these considerations we are to take refuge, it would be better for us to abide in the more reasonable doctrine of the *gemina mens*—which after all remains until to-day the only doctrine which will unite and explain all the facts. The strain on faith involved in the conception of the *gemina mens* is as nothing compared with that involved in trying to believe that “the personal life of the Word” itself was “lived, as it were, from more than one centre,” so that, “in one sphere” He is Himself truly ignorant of that which “in another sphere He essentially knows” (pp. 215, 216). If Canon Gore can believe this, he must needs adopt for himself Tertullian’s bold declaration commended to us so piously by Sir Thomas Brown, that he believes *quia impossibile est*. He thinks that the fact that the whole body of Christian thought from Origen to our own century is against his conclusion should not disturb him, since, he argues, no credal decision stands in his way—though we do not see how he can reconcile his conception of the exinanition of the divine nature with the Chalcedonian declaration that, in combining to form one person, “each nature preserves its own special characteristic.” But this is a small matter. The Scriptural revelations of a divine self-consciousness in the man Christ Jesus—for his partial recognition of which in opposition to extremists of his own school of thought we thank Canon Gore—when as fully appreciated as its revelations of a human self-consciousness are by Canon Gore, will force on us the admission of the presence and activity in our Lord and Saviour throughout His mortal life of that *gemina mens*, which remains His characteristic now in glory. And, by the way, how does Canon Gore conceive the self-consciousness of the *exalted* Christ?—*The Holy Spirit the Paraclete*. A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Man. By the Rev. John Robson, D.D., Aberdeen, etc. 12mo, pp. xiv, 248. (Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1895.) A devout and edifying