

QUEEN'S QUARTERLY

VOL. IV.

APRIL, 1897.

No. 4.

All articles intending for publication, books for review, exchanges,—and all correspondence relating thereto—should be addressed to the editors, Box A, Queen's University, Kingston, Ont.

THE RELATION OF JESUS TO THE JEWISH LAW.

THIS is a question of considerable difficulty, arising from the presence of apparently contradictory elements in the data provided by the Synoptic Gospels from which we have to construct our view. On the one hand we have at least one utterance of Jesus (Matt. v, 17, 18) that seems at first sight to assert in the most uncompromising spirit of ultra-Jewish literalism, the eternal permanence of every infinitesimal fragment of the Law; on the other hand, many sayings and many facts are recorded which show great disregard, almost contempt, for a multitude of those very details apparently declared to possess inviolable sanctity through all time. The difficulty is to reconcile this seeming discrepancy.

Two considerations have to be borne in mind in the discussion of this question; the limitations of the historical mission of Jesus, and the fact that the expression of seemingly extreme conservatism referred to was invoked by controversy with the Scribes. The immediate task of Jesus lay with His own people; the significance of His person and work for the whole human race was certainly not prominent in His mind. Like all great men, He was engrossed by the urgent business that lay ready to His hand. "He was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He had to wean His disciples gradually from their enslaving attachment to the Pharisaic traditions wherein they had been nurtured. He could not spring upon them suddenly, even if these had been fully present to His own consciousness, all the revolutionary consequences latent in His fundamental views