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THE CHRISTIAN MESSIAH IN THE LIGHT OF JUDAISM ANCIENT AND MODERN.¹

ST LUKE ii 25: *And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel.*

THE first two chapters of St Luke's Gospel give an idyllic picture of the pious circle into which our Lord was born. In the form largely of poetry the aspirations—the Messianic ideals—of this circle are set before us, which recall and sum up all that is best and noblest in the great Messianic utterances of the Old Testament prophets. The atmosphere that pervades them is essentially that of Old Testament prophecy at its highest level. Thus the Song of Zacharias, which may fitly be termed an Old Testament canticle, in the first strophe blesses God for the fulfilment of the promise to David, and looks for the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant, recalling such passages as:—

*There will I cause a horn to sprout for David;
I have prepared a lamp for mine anointed,
His enemies will I clothe with shame;
But upon him shall his crown be brilliant.²*

The reference to *the holy covenant* confirmed by an oath which *Hesware to our forefather Abraham* recalls the great promise made to the 'father of the faithful' that his seed should become a great nation, and that in him *all the families of the earth should be blessed.*³

In the second strophe, again, the language of Old Testament prophecy is taken up—the great passage from Deutero-Isaiah about the Herald:—

¹ The Macbride Sermon preached before the University of Oxford, Sunday, Jan. 28, 1912, on 'Messianic Prophecy in relation to Christ'.

² Ps. cxxxii 17, 18.

³ Gen. xii 1-3.

*Hark! one proclaiming: make ready in the wilderness the way of Jahveh;
Make level in the desert a highway for our God.¹*

Or again the promise of light to them that sit in darkness, as given in the earlier Isaiah:—

*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light,
They that dwell in the land of deep shadow, upon them hath the light gleamed.²*

But perhaps the most striking point that emerges in this part of the song is the conception of the coming Messianic salvation as consisting in *remission of sins—to give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sins.*³ The Messianic salvation is to consist essentially in moral and spiritual redemption.

When we turn to the Song of Simeon, one other great conception emerges; the Messiah whose advent is celebrated is to be not only the spiritual glory of his people Israel, but also *a light to lighten the Gentiles*—an echo of the great Servant-passages in Deutero-Isaiah in which the Servant's mission is defined:—

*So I make thee a light of the nations,
That my salvation may be to the ends of the earth.⁴*

It will be remembered, in this connexion, that the idea of the Messiah as *the light of the Gentiles* comes to expression in the Similitudes of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, where we read of the heavenly Son of Man:—

He shall be a staff to the righteous on which they will support themselves and not fall; and he shall be the light of the Gentiles, and the hope of those that are troubled in heart.⁵

In Simeon's further speech another note is struck; the strain of sorrow mingles with the buoyant hope of what precedes:—

Behold this one is set for the falling and the rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which is spoken against.⁶

Here we seem to catch a note of foreboding that the advent of the Messiah will be accompanied by strife and suffering. It will be in the nature of a discriminating judgement, serving to reveal *the thoughts of many hearts.*

¹ Is. xl 3.

² Is. ix 1.

³ St Luke ii 77.

⁴ Is. xlix 6 (cf. xlii 6).

⁵ xlviii 4.

⁶ St Luke ii 34 (cf. Is. viii 14).

Such is the Messianic expectation disclosed to us in the opening chapters of St Luke's Gospel. We catch a glimpse of a pious circle in Israel who were awaiting the advent of a Messiah who should effect the moral and spiritual redemption of his people; who should reign as a spiritual prince in the hearts of a regenerate people, and so fulfil the old promises made to the House of David; and one who should extend his spiritual dominion to the ends of the earth. These hopes were based and nourished upon Old Testament prophecy, and were cherished within a limited circle who were to be found both among the learned—especially among the disciples of Hillel—and also among the people. Among the latter were doubtless included some of the more spiritually minded of the apocalyptists. The fulfilment of these hopes in the person and career of Jesus of Nazareth may be said to be the theme of the New Testament generally.

Doubtless the poems on which this estimate is based are the product, to some extent, of reflexion. They exhibit the piety of the primitive Palestinian Christian Church. Their genuinely primitive character and their essential conformity to truth and fact are guaranteed by their whole tone and character, their Christology, and their setting. In them we ought to see, as I venture to think, translations of hymns, originally composed in Hebrew for liturgical use in the early Palestinian community of Hebrew Christians.

The Messianic ideals that have just been sketched were those of a minority, of which Zacharias the priest and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, the aged Simeon and the prophetess Anna were typical examples. To these we may add, as an example of the learned and aristocratic class, Joseph of Arimathaea, who also *was looking for the Kingdom of God*.¹ As in the days of the prophets, the loftiest and most spiritual hopes of the nation were the possession of a pious few.

Very different was the conception of the Messianic King cherished in the circles of the Zealot party. Here the Messiah was pictured as a political deliverer who should annihilate the power of heathen Rome, and establish a world-empire with Jerusalem for its capital. It was this delusive hope that captivated the imagination of the masses of the people, and led to the disastrous revolts against the imperial power, first in A.D. 66–70,

¹ St Mark xv 43 (cf. St Luke xxiii 51).

and finally in 133-135 under Bar Kokba. If a political Messiah could enlist the allegiance of so great a Rabbi as Aqiba, it will be at once apparent how far-reaching the appeal of this mistaken ideal must have been. And yet it would be a mistake to suppose that the purely political ideal ever satisfied the nation as a whole. Before both the earlier and the later revolts influential voices of protest were raised. The great teacher Jochanan ben Zakkai withdrew about A.D. 66 to Jamnia to found a school which was destined to perpetuate the religion of the Law; and Aqiba was rebuked by more than one of his colleagues for adhesion to an adventure, which, as they foresaw, was destined to bring about the ruin of the nation.

But, further, the Judaism of this earlier period down to A.D. 70 and even to A.D. 135 was a larger and more complex thing than it afterwards became. It embraced liberal elements which were later eliminated. The most eloquent witness, perhaps, of this is the great missionary propaganda which was carried on throughout the colonies of the Jewish Dispersion by Hellenistic Jews, and carried on, as Josephus attests and as the missionary labours of St Paul bear witness, with amazing success. The liberal party, which was strong among the Hellenistic Jews, and had influential support even in Palestine, was willing to divest Judaism of its accidental elements and to insist upon essentials—the profession of faith in one God, the observance of the Sabbath-rest, and the abjuration of idolatry in all its forms as well as its immoral accompaniments. In a word, all that it insisted upon was ethical monotheism. Circumcision was not demanded as a *sine qua non* for the admission of proselytes, only the purificatory bath of baptism.

‘Wash your whole stature’, says the Sibyl, ‘clean from impurity in running streams, and with hands uplifted to heaven, ask for forgiveness of your doing; then the worship of God shall heal gross impiety.’¹ It was the school of Shammai that insisted upon the letter of the Law about circumcision; it was probably also Pharisees of the same school who came into collision with our Lord, and provoked His stern denunciation. To this ‘Catholick Judaism’² Philo belonged, who conceived Israel’s

¹ *Sibyll-Oracles* iv 104 f.

² The phrase is Mr J. H. A. Hart’s; cf. his *The Hope of Catholick Judaism* (Oxford, 1910).

mission to be a priestly nation for the whole world: 'Israel', he says, 'is above all the nations beloved of God, one that has received the priesthood for the whole human race.'¹ To Philo the missionary propaganda of the Dispersion was an essential part of Judaism. Now of this wider Judaism, which included, as we have seen, some, at any rate, of the apocalyptists, Christianity claims to be the heir. And the claim has been justified at the bar of history. For the religion of Jesus took over, as a matter of fact, the Greek Bible of the Jewish Dispersion (the LXX), as well as the missionary propaganda with its fruits, the Greek converts. All these Rabbinical Judaism surrendered. Truly, as a distinguished Jewish scholar² has said: 'If Jesus was the Christ, then the religion of the Jewish Dispersion was Christianity.'

When we turn to the question of our Lord's own conception of His Messianic office we are confronted with undoubted difficulties. The subject has been much debated during recent years, and the discussion of it has given rise to much controversy. Into the full details of this it would obviously be impossible to enter now. But one or two considerations of a general character which bear upon the fundamentals of the problem may be permitted. Controversy has not been without definite results which have brought some important points into clear relief. It is admitted on all hands now that there is a large eschatological element behind our Lord's conception.

The most characteristic expression of our Lord's Messianic consciousness is undoubtedly summed up in His use of the Messianic title, which He appropriated to Himself, of the Son of Man. What is its significance?

It is generally agreed that the special significance of the term is largely determined by its use in the famous passage in Dan. vii 13f: *I saw in the night visions, and behold there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.* The author of Daniel apparently used the term *one like unto a son of man* in contrast with the beasts (who represent the heathen world-empires) as a symbol for the people

¹ *De Abrah.* ii 15.

² Moriz Friedländer. *Das Judentum in der vorchristlichen griechischen Welt* p. 19.

of Israel. But it does not follow—as has so often been supposed—that the figure *like a man* (or *son of man*) has no individual or personal significance. On the contrary it seems probable that *one like unto a son of man* is really a descriptive term for an angelic being—presumably Michael, Israel's angel-prince, in the thought of the author of Daniel—who acts as Israel's representative and counterpart. The figure is thus both a symbol and a person. The author of Daniel probably borrowed this figure from tradition, from one form of which *the Man* of the Ezra-Apocalypse (2 Esdras xiii)—who is there identified with the Messiah—was also derived. This *Man* is a heavenly being or angel who has been invested with attributes proper only to Jahveh Himself. Thus, like Jahveh (Is. xix 1), he rides upon the clouds, and in the Ezra-Apocalypse his appearance is described in the terms of a theophany. The idea of the heavenly being, who thus comes to view as a firmly fixed feature in old apocalyptic tradition, is the source of the conception of the heavenly Messiah—the Son of Man—of the Similitudes of the Book of Enoch, the composition of which most scholars assign to the first century B.C. Here the angelic being of Daniel, invested with Messianic attributes, becomes the pre-existent heavenly Messiah who is to judge both men and angels. It seems clear, however, that this Messianic conception was not at any time widely known or popular among the Jews. *The Son of Man* was certainly not a current name for the Messiah among the Jews generally, though the conception of the pre-existent Messiah seems to be clearly present in the LXX of Dan. vii 13.¹ It was apparently cherished in certain (probably small) apocalyptic circles to which, no doubt, some of the earliest generation of Christians belonged. It is to this circle, presumably, that our Lord owed His knowledge of the idea, and its Messianic associations, as shewn by His appropriation to Himself of the title *Son of Man*. But in His hands the original conception was profoundly modified by being combined with the idea of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah liii. In the idea so modified and embodied in the term, Christ seems to have found the most adequate expression of His Messianic consciousness. It thus acquires in His mouth that

¹ ἔθεώρουν ἐν ὄραματι τῆς νυκτὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἤρχετο καὶ ὡς παλαιὸς ἡμερῶν παρῆν.

combination of the ideas of humiliation and glory which is so striking a feature in His use of the expression. The Messianic interpretation of Dan. vii was also known to the Rabbis, though, as has been pointed out, it never resulted in the current popular use of the term *Son of Man* as a title of the Messiah. The great Jewish Rabbi Aqiba (early second century A. D.) spoke of the 'thrones' of Dan. vii 9 as prepared for God and for David,¹ an exegesis which presupposes the Messianic interpretation of Dan. vii 13. A later Rabbi (Joshua b. Levi, c. 250 A. D.) combined the two texts, which he interpreted Messianically, Dan. vii 13 and Zech. ix 9: 'Behold with the clouds of heaven came one like a Son of Man . . . Lowly and riding upon an ass.' How is the apparent contradiction to be reconciled? asks the Rabbi. The answer is: 'If they [i. e. the generation in which the Messiah comes] shall be worthy he will come with the clouds of heaven (i. e. in glory and majesty), and if not, he will come upon an ass' (i. e. in humiliation).² In this way the Rabbi strove to combine prophecies which he accepted as speaking of Messiah's humiliation and glory. The New Testament follows a different path. It sees the apparent contradiction resolved in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In the Son of Man who had not where to lay His head, who willingly suffered the deepest of all earthly humiliation in the death of the Cross, and who was afterwards exalted to the Throne of God, the writers of the New Testament found a key which unlocked all the significance of the ancient prophecies, which shed a new and brilliant light upon many obscure passages, and solved all the apparent contradictions. Can it be wondered at that, with such an intense conviction as they possessed of the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of their Lord, they should go forth as they did and preach with triumphant enthusiasm the gospel of the crucified but exalted Messiah?

It must be admitted, indeed, that in their appeal to prophecy and in their application of it there was something new as well as old. The New Testament in its citations from the Old Testament Scriptures preserves much of the old exegesis of the ancient synagogue, which has often been refined away or modified by the later Rabbis and teachers. An interesting example of this

¹ T. B. Sanh. 38b.

² T. B. Sanh. 98a.

On the Christian view of Christ as the great representative Man there is in fact no difficulty in applying prophecies which originally had a collective significance to the Messiah. As Dr Stanton has well said¹: 'The New Testament writers, in their application of the language of the prophets to Christ and His Church, pointed out the true fulfilment of what the prophets dreamed, in the deepest sense of the word fulfilment, that is, the complete realization of the essential idea of what they aspired after; while, at the same time, the fact that the aspirations of the prophets did actually in God's Providence prepare the way of Christ by training men in the expectation of Him and His Kingdom, in itself gives an authority to such an interpretation of their language... In the ideal of the theocratic king, or in the experience of some saint of God, or in God's relations to Israel as His child, or (in one instance) in the Psalmist's conception of the true destiny of man, features were shadowed forth, however dimly, which were recognized as existing in Jesus in their most perfect manner.' This is not to abnegate the rights of historical investigation which seeks to discover by all means at command the circumstances which conditioned the original composition of a prophecy, and the significance it bore to the original writer and readers. But the prophetic word did not exhaust its meaning with its original utterance and immediate application. It was constantly being re-interpreted and adapted to later circumstances and conditions. The preservation of the prophetic writings in a sacred Book through the centuries was bound to produce this result. As a great Jewish scholar² has said: 'The Bible is, and at all times was, a Word full of fresh life, not a dead book. This everlasting Word belonged not to a particular age; it could not be dependent [for its meaning] on the time when it was written down.' One important element, then, that must be considered with Messianic prophecy is the history of its interpretation. And this is largely dependent upon the nature of the Hope which is, (at once,) partly its outcome and partly a controlling factor in determining its general direction. It is all-important to bear this in mind when we come to estimate the Messianic conceptions of Rabbinic and of later Judaism.

¹ *The Jewish and Christian Messiah* p. 195 f.

² Geiger *Urschrift* p. 72 f.

The conceptions of the Messianic Age as these appear in the Midrashim and Haggadistic parts of the Talmud are too varied to be described in detail here. There is, of course, the period of tribulation which precedes the Messianic Age proper. In the wars of Gog and Magog the mysterious Messiah ben Joseph will be killed; but will be restored to life by Elijah, the forerunner of the true Messiah ben David. The latter is pictured as a man of the Royal House of David, divine only in the greatness of his natural gifts. Through him the Kingdom of Israel, now gathered in, is to be set up, and is to be the world-power. This is usually thought of as of temporary duration—lasting 400 or 1,000 years—and during its existence it is to be marked by the enjoyment of great felicity. It will be terminated by the end of the world, and the Final Judgement.

It is, however, in the Jewish Liturgy that we find a more truly representative and nobler expression of the Jewish national Messianic hope. Here extravagant fancies are kept in check; the language used is largely controlled by that of the Bible, at any rate in the public prayers; and even in the hymns and piyyutim there is dignity and restraint. In the so-called 'Eighteen-Blessings' (*Shēmōnē 'Esrē*),¹ which forms an integral part of all Jewish services, there are several allusions to or petitions for the coming of the Messiah, who is referred to as 'Redeemer' (i). In xiv and xv the prayer for the coming of the Messiah ben David becomes explicit:—

XIV: *And to Ferusalem, thy city, return in mercy as thou hast said; rebuild it soon, in our days, as an everlasting building, and speedily set up therein the throne of David.*

XV: *Cause the Shoot (Branch) of David speedily to shoot forth, and let his horn be exalted in thy salvation, because we wait for thy salvation continually.*

The Eighteen Benedictions also contain petitions for the gathering in of the exiles, and the restoration of the sacrificial worship of the Temple. But the rôle and person of the Messiah are not emphasized. It is the Redemption that occupies the central point in the aspirations of petitioning Israel. The language often glides insensibly into that of prayer for the Redemption, without any

¹ The full text of these can be seen in Singer's ed. of the *Authorized Daily Prayer-Book* (Hebrew and English) pp. 44-54 (Eyre & Spottiswoode).

allusion to the Messiah at all. God Himself is Israel's Redeemer:—

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, the Redeemer of Israel.

And God Himself is Israel's true King:—

Restore our judges as at the first, and our counsellors as at the beginning; remove from us grief and sighing; and reign Thou over us, O Lord, Thou alone, in lovingkindness and tender mercy, and justify us in judgement.

In fact—and it is important that this should be remembered—the Messianic Age has always occupied a larger place in the thought of Rabbinical Judaism than the personal Messiah. The finest prayers in the Jewish Liturgy breathe the aspiration that God's sovereignty may be set up in all the world:—

Now, therefore, O Lord our God, impose Thine awe upon all Thy works, and Thy dread upon all that Thou hast created, that all works may fear Thee, and all creatures prostrate themselves before Thee; that they may all form a single band to do Thy will with a perfect heart, even as we know, O Lord our God, that dominion is Thine, strength is in Thine hand, and might in Thy right hand, and that Thy name is to be feared above all that Thou hast created (cf. Singer p. 239).

A prayer breathing similar sentiments¹ forms the conclusion of every service in the Synagogue.

It is, perhaps, hardly surprising, in view of the subordinate and unessential rôle assigned to the personal Messiah in orthodox Judaism, to find Reform Judaism eliminating the Messiah altogether. In an official manifesto of Reform principles put

¹ The 'Alênû, which runs as follows:—'It is our duty (עלנו) to praise the Lord of all things. . . . He is our God; there is none else. . . . We therefore hope in thee, O Lord our God, that we may speedily behold the glory of thy might, when thou wilt remove the abominations from the earth, and the idols shall be utterly cut off, when the world shall be perfected under the kingdom of the Almighty, and all the children of flesh will call upon thy name, when thou wilt turn unto thyself all the wicked of the earth. Let all the inhabitants of the world perceive and know that unto thee every knee must bow, every tongue must swear. Before thee, O Lord our God, let them bow and fall; and unto thy glorious name let them give honour; let them all accept the yoke of thy kingdom, and do thou reign over them speedily, and for ever and ever. For the kingdom is thine, and to all eternity thou wilt reign in glory; as it is written in thy Law, *The Lord shall reign for ever and ever.* And it is said: *And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall the Lord be One, and His name one.*' (See Singer's *Authorized Daily Prayer-Book* p. 76 f.)

forth at Philadelphia in 1869, the following is the first of a series of statements:—

‘The Messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all the children of God in the confession of the unity of God, so as to realize the unity of all rational creatures, and their call to moral sanctification.’

Again, in another manifesto, put forth at Pittsburg in 1885, the following occurs:—

‘We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approaching of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope and for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.’

This, surely, is a confession of religious bankruptcy! As the fulfilment of the glowing hopes, expressed by the prophets and psalmists of Israel, of a divine intervention we are offered modern culture, and the spread of cheap enlightenment!¹

The hopes of orthodox Judaism and orthodox Christianity are not separated by such an impassable gulf. And yet the fundamental differences between them are sufficiently serious. The most important is concerned with the Person of Christ. Orthodox Judaism refuses to assign so exalted a position as is claimed for Jesus to any but God. It has consistently kept its Messiah within purely human limits. The nation is greater than any individual member of it. In order to maintain this position early Rabbinitism was obliged to eliminate a good deal that belonged to the older and wider Judaism that preceded it; in particular it practically banned the whole of the apocalyptic literature which enshrined the developed conception of the heavenly pre-existent Messiah; it also banned the Hellenistic literature of Philo and his contemporaries and predecessors, together with their Greek Bible, the LXX. Recently a controversy has been carried on in a Jewish

¹ This language is not meant to apply to the *whole* position of Reform Judaism, but only to its dissipation of the substance of the Messianic hope. Faith in a real divine intervention—whether by the advent of a personal Messiah or the coming in of the Messianic Age—is surely essential to the hope, and it is deprived of most of its significance if it is thus rationalized away into a colourless evolutionary process.

newspaper¹ on the question whether Philo was a good Jew. According to one of the controversialists he was a good Diaspora-Jew, but his Judaism cannot pass muster from the point of view of orthodox Rabbinic Judaism. Was not Philo, he asks, ultimately responsible for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity?

Quite consistently, from its own point of view, Rabbinic Judaism will have nothing to do with any form of the doctrine of mediation, or a mediator. Inconvenient survivals from the older theology which suggested tendencies of this sort have been largely suppressed or relegated to the background; and passages have even been inserted in some of the oldest parts of the Liturgy, with a polemical aim against the Christian doctrine of the mediatorial Christ, who saves and redeems His people from their sins. The Law² occupies the central place, and is invested with supreme honour in worship and devotion. All this is but the expression of a profound conviction that God has chosen to make a supreme revelation of Himself and His requirements in the Divine Law; and that man is sanctified by the Divine Law which is the very principle of His perfection. The Law thus occupies in Judaism exactly the same position as the Person of Christ and the Incarnation in orthodox Christianity. Perfection is to be sought and attained in the one case in obedience to a system of ordinances; in the other in devotion to a personal Saviour who has realized the divine requirements in a sinless manhood. In the one case the ideal is set forth in a book; in the other it is embodied in a life.

Herein the fundamental and vital difference between Judaism and Christianity is manifest. The inexhaustible significance of the Person of Christ, its perennial religious value in meeting the varying spiritual needs of different ages, races, and civilizations; its attractive inspiring and redemptive power; have been—and are being—shewn in ways and with a frequency that are unmistakable. A religion that sets forth its ideal in the abstract form of a book is necessarily inferior to one that transfigures worship into personal service, and holiness of character into personal devotion to the Incarnate Son of God.

Another fundamental difference between Rabbinical Judaism

¹ *The Jewish Chronicle* (January 1912).

² This and the following three paragraphs are derived from the writer's Essay, *The Spiritual Teaching and Value of the Jewish Prayer-Book* (1906) pp. 14 f, 44 f.

and Christianity concerns the question of sin and forgiveness. The Rabbis may with truth be said almost completely to have spiritualized the idea of sacrifice and atonement. Nothing could well be nobler or higher than their doctrine of repentance. Even the acknowledgement of sin seems to be expressed in the penitential prayers in adequate language; while the emphasis that is laid on God's mercy¹ and yearning for the return of the penitent is fervent enough almost to be Christian.

Where Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism part company is as to *the means by which such true repentance is to be secured.*

In place of a Saviour who has died for the sins of the world, Judaism offers to the sinner the Law, the Day of Atonement. It has ever been deficient in sympathy with the unlearned, the ignorant, the weak, the fallen, the lost. 'Judaism', says Dr Dalman, 'exhibits no lack of benevolence, even outside the circle of its race-connexion. It possesses, however, nothing corresponding to the Christian efforts for saving the lost, nothing parallel to our home and foreign missions; nor can it possess anything of the kind', because it has failed to make Love the central principle of Religion.²

The need for reconstruction of the Christian apologetic in the face of Judaism asserts itself inevitably from age to age. What is needed to-day, for orthodox Jews, is a demonstration on a large scale of the truth of the New Testament claims to be the true and legitimate development of the religion of the Old Testament. If the kernel of the Old Testament religion lies in the teaching of the prophets, it will not be difficult to prove that the New Testament is its rightful heir. For if anything is certain it is that the New Testament is full of the prophetic spirit; Jesus Himself, according to Mr Montefiore, was the greatest of the prophets; while the beginnings of the Christian movement were marked by a great revival of the spirit of prophecy, which, according to the Rabbinical literature itself, is to be one of the signs of the Messianic time. It was in the prophetic spirit that the Christian missionaries went forth to realize the ideal of the older prophets, and make the Christian Messiah to be *the light to lighten the Gentiles.*

¹ Especially the thirteen attributes mentioned in Ex. xxxiv 6 f.

² *Christianity and Judaism* (E. T.) p. 47.

If all this could be set before orthodox Jews in a Jewish way, they would listen; for they were never more ready to listen than at the present time. When a Jewish Rabbi like Dr Klein of Stockholm can publicly state, as he has just done,¹ that the prophetic religion is the true religion of Israel; that the Law was an intruding element—a compromise; and that one of the works of the Messiah, which was realized in Jesus, was the annulling of the binding character of the ceremonial Law, we are naturally startled. Surely along such lines as these a reconciliation between Church and Synagogue ought to be possible.

The antagonism between Church and Synagogue has wrought untold mischief to both. Judaism by organizing itself against Christianity has impoverished itself; while the Christian Church has, in its turn, suffered by having Judaism as an opposing force outside. Nor is the fault entirely on the side of the Jews. I doubt whether Christianity has ever been presented to the Jews—at any rate since the second century—in a way calculated to make a large appeal to the best of them. Individual Jews have in all ages been drawn to the profession of faith in Jesus of Nazareth. But while the profession of Christianity involves, as it involves now, the repudiation by the Jew of his entire national past, and his absorption in one or other branch of the Western Church, can it be wondered at if the great mass of the best Jews refuse to contemplate such a surrender?

It was a great disaster when the distinctively Jewish branch of early Christianity disappeared. Recently a remarkable tendency has manifested itself in more than one quarter to attempt to revive a Jewish form of Christianity. One ideal that has been expressed is the revival of the Church of the Hebrews, 'that branch of the Holy Catholic Church', to use Bishop Blyth's words, 'which was first developed', and is now 'in suspense'.² Such a Church would naturally possess its own Liturgy and offices, essentially Jewish in expression and character, and its own distinctive organization. If such a community could ever be organized on a strong basis, and maintained, it would gradually concentrate the strength—which is now scattered and dissipated—

¹ *Ist Jesus eine historische Persönlichkeit?* (Tübingen 1910).

² From a paper by Bishop Blyth, printed in *Church and Synagogue*, January 1902.

of Jewish Christianity, and would set this forth in a distinctive and arresting way before the world and before Jewry. It might well, we may believe, in time develop into that Jewish Branch of the Catholic Church of which Bishop Blyth speaks.

Most Jews—including those of the Reform Branch—believe, or profess to believe, that Judaism has still a future, and a mission to carry out in the future to the world at large. Most Christians, too, would agree; only they would say: No religious future of any significance to the world at large is possible for Judaism with Jesus of Nazareth left out. The Jews themselves admit that the religion of Jesus has partially accomplished the Messiah's work by winning so many millions to belief in God.¹ We would ask: What will be left for the Jewish Messiah to accomplish when he comes? No; the verdict of history justifies the Christian claim. Jesus of Nazareth has accomplished—and will more than accomplish—the work of the Jewish Messiah. In Him Israel should see not the destroyer of the Jewish race but its glorifier.

As a great scholar—Dr Briggs—who has investigated the whole subject of Messianic Prophecy in all its bearings has said: 'In Jesus of Nazareth the key of the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament has been found. All its phases find their realization in His unique personality, in His unique work, in His unique Kingdom. The Messiah of prophecy appears in the Messiah of history. The redemption predicted as the completion of the redemption experienced in greater and richer fullness in the successive stages of the old covenant is at last completed in the Messiah of the Cross and the Throne, in the Lamb that was slain for the redemption of men, but who ever liveth as the fountain of life, and the owner of the Keys of Hades. . . . It was the same divine Being who devised the redemption of the world, who revealed it in prophetic prediction, who prepared for it in the development of history, who accomplished it in time and eternity. . . . None but God could give such prophecy; none

¹ In the early Middle Ages it was officially declared on Rabbinical authority that Christians were to be regarded as *Gērē Tōshāb*, i.e. proselytes of the gate (see Isaac b. Sheshet, Response 119; cited by G. Friedlander *Jewish Sources of Sermon on the Mount* p. 266).

but God can fulfil such prophecy. The ideal of prophecy and the real of history correspond in Him, who is above the limits of time and space and circumstance, who is the creator, ruler, and saviour of the world, and who alone has the wisdom, the grace, and the power to conceive the idea of redemption, and then accomplish it in reality through the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second advent of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, very God of very God, the Light and Life and Saviour of the world.¹

G. H. Box.

¹ *Messianic Prophecy* p. 498f.