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THE  
CHURCHMAN

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MAY, 1904.

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ART. I.—OUR LORD'S USE OF SCRIPTURE.

I READ lately, with mingled feelings, an article in *The Spectator* (April 9), a quarter which is itself a guarantee for thoughtfulness and reverence in problems of religion. The writer discusses our blessed Lord's use of the ancient Scriptures. Much that he says is valuable, some things admirable. But the article, as a whole, is an example of the profound revolution of thought in regard of the Divine character and authority of the Old Testament which the last forty years, and particularly the last seventeen or eighteen, have witnessed within Christian circles. So far as the article indicates its writer's point of view, he appears to look upon the Law, Prophets, and Psalms with a regard the same *in kind* as that with which he would approach any literature of moral significance and power. I mean that the Old Testament apparently offers itself to him, as a whole, as scarcely distinguishable in kind from, for example, the patristic literature. I trace no suggestion that he finds in it any place for proper prediction—for a "second sight" which does not merely discern principles and tendencies, and tell forth moral truth, but records superhuman foresights of a purposed future. He finds no difficulty in speaking with severe reprobation of the record, in the earlier Hebrew books, of tremendous severities as inflicted at the command of the Divine Being. He seems even to refer, in one passage, to the great sins of Scripture heroes as if they morally defaced the Old Testament.

It would be most unfair to judge a thoughtful writer's whole scheme of belief from one article. One would gather from the article that (in the writer's view) the Old Testament grew up

simply as the best expression, in one period after another, of the thought of Israel, overruled for the inculcation of righteousness upon the whole—ay, so that no other literature can vie with it in that respect—but still quite normally developed as to conditions of production. But the writer's view, when known as a whole, may rise much higher than this. Only this does not appear in his discussion. And that discussion is typical in this respect of a vast deal of thought and speech around us in the Church.

Apparently, according to this article, our Lord's use of the Old Testament was much like our use, any day, of noble poetry, inspiring hymns, time-hallowed public prayers. Its best passages lent Him supremely-fitting expressions for His thought and purposes. It was a moral help to Him that men of the past had witnessed nobly for God before Him. A deep instinct led Him to take up their words as a stay and strength, in this respect, to His own soul.

One chief reflection which arises upon this account of the matter is that it does not square with the facts when looked at directly and afresh in the Gospels. To me it seems impossible to maintain, with the Gospels open, and allowed to speak fully for themselves, that such a student has at all accurately reported the indicated attitude of our Lord's mind. Can anything be more evident, *in limine*, than that the supernatural, the miraculous (in the common meaning of those words), not only had no difficulty for Him, but was continually present to His consciousness? He who explicitly undertook to die and to rise again, He who expressed His absolute belief that an army of angels, at His prayer, would appear in the dark Garden to protect Him from His enemies, was in a state of thought inconceivably different from that of one who merely felt His moral purposes strengthened by moral sympathy from the past. He walked in the (to Him) visible environment of the living powers of the eternal world.

And consider again the particular terms in which He appealed to the Old Testament as He used it. To Him it is far other than merely a book He loves and which springs to His lips. He addresses Himself to His last and unfathomable sufferings with the deliberate recollection that if He declined to do so the Scriptures would not be fulfilled. He utters His last pathetic request for human aid, "I thirst," on purpose (He must have said so, after resurrection, to St. John) that the last detail of the predictive plan of His sufferings might be fulfilled. When He rose, He spent some hours of His first immortal day in unfolding to two of His followers, not the moral significance of the Old Testament,

but its Divine programme of His sufferings and glory. And He did this in terms which imply that His followers ought long before to have read that programme, so plain was it to be seen, for themselves.<sup>1</sup> Is it not an artificial exegesis, an unscientific, because more or less prejudiced, development of the data of the Gospels, to teach or to imply that our Lord Jesus Christ only found the Old Testament full of perfect expressions for His thought and of moral sympathy with His position? He found it, indeed, to be all this. But above all He found it to be the very Word of His Father, revealing the purpose of His own Incarnation, and foretelling with Divine decisiveness "the sufferings destined for the Christ, and the glories that should follow."

Let the student, if unhappily he thinks that he must face the terrible task, criticise the thought of our blessed Lord in this matter—let him, if he thinks himself absolutely compelled to so tremendous a conclusion, affirm that in thus thinking (even in His resurrection life) He only took the view of His contemporaries, not knowing better. But do not let him explain the Lord's use of the Old Testament so as to imply that He was in implicit sympathy with "liberal" views of inspiration, prediction, typology, and the miraculous. For to imply this is to manipulate the data with uncritical freedom.

The Old Testament is, indeed, from some aspects, a mine of problems, many of them as anxious and painful as possible. The most patient, reverent, penetrating study (study very different from a so-called "fearless" criticism) is yet wanting upon many of the phenomena there presented, both of morals and of events. But, none the less, the Old Testament is also the Book which exhibits the mysterious and strictly superhuman phenomenon of being, while a slowly-formed Library, yet a Book. And it is the Book which alone in literature has this title to awful honour, that it was the oracular sacred Book of the Son of God.

I may be allowed in this connection to comment upon a current use of the word "CHRIST," a use largely exemplified in literature of the critical type. Extremely often we find that word used as nearly as possible in the sense of a mere proper name. We have, perhaps, an enumeration of founders or leaders of religion, and the writer mentions together Moses, Sakya-mouni, Mahomet, Christ. We read this or that about Christ's period, Christ's teaching, Christ's view. I may be

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<sup>1</sup> I owe this remark to my late reverend friend, Dr. David Brown, of Aberdeen. "O foolish ones, and slow of heart!" The Lord implies that the Old Testament prophecies should have been plain reading to plain men in a spiritually receptive state.

narrow and prejudiced, but I own to a repugnance to any habitual and prevalent usage of this sort only less strong than that occasioned by that easy use of the name JESUS which seems sometimes to lower the Lord to the level of a *mere* humanity, and which sometimes avowedly does so.

But CHRIST is not a proper name. It is a sublime title, with a whole world of mysterious antecedents and sequels attaching to it. To use it, intelligently and with recollection, is to connote the reality of a quite unique chain of prediction and preparation; a succession of prophecies, and foreshadowings, and unutterable hopes based upon them. It is to touch upon influences which, just before and after the date we call the Christian era, and just in that particular district, Palestine, had generated an expectation profound, universal, and without any real parallel. Pagan history, as distinctly as the Gospels, bears witness to this. Who does not know the passages of Tacitus and Suetonius, which inform us that the last desperate struggle of the Jews with Rome had that vast Expectation at its back? "The Christ" to the holders of that strange hope, whatever else He was or was not, was the quite supernaturally promised Deliverer and King of Israel; Lord of the World; MESSIAH.

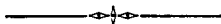
I cannot but think that many an argument and statement would be cautioned and corrected if the writer were obliged always to write "Messiah" instead of "Christ." That Hebrew word, by the facts and influences of usage, still glows, in a degree which the Greek word has been allowed to lose, with the solemn glory of the supernatural, the prophetic. It denotes a personage *toto celo* different from the spiritual leader who is merely the type of his age, the interpreter of his fellows, the inspirer of an enthusiasm, or even the founder of a creed. It means the Lord of the great Promise, which was not natural but Divine, alike in origin and delivery. Well, and "CHRIST" is only the translation of "MESSIAH." It sends the word out upon a vaster mission. But it omits or alters no element of its meaning.

Many a glib sentence about "Christ" would already suggest its own revision if the author had to write of "the opinions of Messiah," "the influences which told upon Messiah."

I am very far from crying out against inquiry. And I have nothing but sympathy with the desire to minimize in every lawful way "the Difficulties of Belief." Who that has ever felt the night-frost of doubt can fail to have such sympathy? But I am quite sure that we only build up a great difficulty of belief when we imply that we can have in our Lord Jesus Christ (I wish that *that* designation, in its fulness, were more common now in Christian literature) at once a truly Divine

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