

The immortal Maimonides (born 1135, died 1204), in his wonderful work, *More Nebhuchim*—"the guide of the perplexed," is similarly free, and is in advance of many of our modern critics in treating of the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic expressions in Holy Scriptures.

Spinoza (born 1632, died 1677), who remained a Jew in spite of the attempts of his Protestant and Catholic friends to convert him; Moses Mendelssohn (born 1729, died 1786), and a number of Jewish scholars of our century, might be quoted as instances and proofs, that with the acceptance of the results of honest criticism, it is not only possible to keep within the fold of Judaism, but that it is

the duty of a Jew to "investigate well," and to "prove all things, and to hold fast what is good."

For this very reason, the modern enlightened Jew cannot accept the "Messiah" of St. Paul or any other apostle. He does not, however, look with contempt upon Christianity, as only ignorance or narrow-mindedness can assert, but he considers it sympathetically, and, with the great Moses ben Maimon, sees in it another form of Judaism, whose mission is to spread the worship of the Most High God among the nations, in order to verify and consummate the promise given to Abraham: "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

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## The Teaching of our Lord as to the Authority of the Old Testament.

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### THE LORD'S TEACHING AS TO THE LAW.

#### I.

WE now proceed with the details of the appeal to Christ in reference to the Old Testament. This appeal, we have seen in the foregoing address that we are fully entitled to make; and we have further seen that the fulness of divine knowledge, which we must ascribe to our Lord and to His teaching, indisputably warrants our accepting as conclusive and final the answers to that appeal, whensoever they can be shown to be either included in, or legitimately deducible from, the recorded teaching of our Lord.

But first of all, What exactly is the tenor of our appeal? Is it not substantially this?—for guidance in our estimate of the view of the Old Testament that is now pressed upon us by modern teachers, and has been set before us, both in its full and in its modified form in a foregoing paper.

Such is the tenor of the appeal. Now in what form can the answer be given? Can it be otherwise than by the utterances of Christ in regard of the Old Testament, and the deductions that may legitimately be drawn from them? If this be so, then it will at once be seen that the utmost care must be taken in selecting out of the numerous

references of Christ to the Old Testament only those that bear directly, or by just and clear inference, on the subject-matter of the appeal. It cannot be too strongly urged that when we appeal to the words of Christ as authenticating the Old Testament, we must make it clear to demonstration what it is that they really do authenticate. The loose and popular way in which the appeal to Christ's words has often been made has greatly impaired, in many cases, the validity of the argument, and has raised prejudices against the whole nature of the appeal, from which, as we have partly seen in the preceding address, even writers of high character have not been able to free themselves. The *ad captandum* argument, bad always, is pre-eminently bad and reprehensible in momentous controversies like the present.

We shall have, then, to exercise the greatest care in our selection of the references of our Lord to the Old Testament, and especially to be on our guard against pressing them beyond what they will logically and exegetically bear. The references of our Lord which bear directly on our present controversy are confessedly few; but the references to the Old Testament, and the citations which He vouchsafed to make from it, are very numerous, and these references and citations do indisputably create impressions which are of great subsidiary

moment, and often carry conviction where more direct arguments may seem to fail. A few of these impressions, derived simply from a general review of these citations and references taken as a whole, it may here not be inappropriate to specify. They are but impressions, but they are impressions which many of us will recognise as having exercised considerable influence on our estimate of the real nature and trustworthiness of the Old Testament. Of these general impressions we may mention three or four that seem to bear most upon present controversies.

The first relates to the form of the written Word, and is this—That the Old Testament to which our Lord referred was practically identical with that which we have now in use. There are, as we well know, many instances in which the exact words as quoted by our Lord are not found in any text. It may even be true, as asserted by a very competent writer, that the text of the Hebrew Scriptures in current use in our Lord's days was not the same in all respects as that which we now have: still the deviations when analysed are of a nature that certainly does not invalidate the general truth of the impression. We may be thankful that the text which we have is as pure as it seems to be. That much, however, remains to be done in this particular department may be perfectly admitted.

A second impression certainly is—That our Lord's knowledge of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, speaking humanly, was of the most exact and comprehensive nature. This impression is created not only by the numerous citations or references, extending as they do from Genesis to the Second Book of Chronicles, but also by the reminiscences, so to speak, of the Old Testament which our Master's words seem constantly to be bringing home to us. And it is worthy of note that they are reminiscences solely of the canonical Scriptures. Not only is there no citation directly made from the Apocrypha, but, as seems most probable, not even a reference to it, or an echo from its words.<sup>1</sup>

A third impression relates to the general aspect in which our Lord regarded the Scriptures which He cited or alluded to. That He regarded them as pre-eminently Holy Scripture, cannot possibly be doubted. This is shown indirectly by forms of reference or citation: "The Scripture;"<sup>2</sup> "The

Scriptures;"<sup>3</sup> "The law and the prophets,"<sup>4</sup> in reference to the whole of the Old Testament; "The law,"<sup>5</sup> in similar inclusive reference; "The Scriptures of the prophets,"<sup>6</sup> and, on one occasion, somewhat significantly, "all the things that have been written *through* the prophets;"<sup>7</sup> and lastly, the solemn "It is written,"<sup>8</sup>—these all being known forms of referring to Holy Scripture in the time of our Lord, and certainly implying that as they were regarded by our Lord's contemporaries, so were they regarded by Him.

We may mention yet a last impression which seems produced by a very large number of passages, viz. that there was a divine fulness in whatever was cited or referred to,—something far beyond the letter, depths of meaning really to be found even in what might seem the simplest forms of expression: in a word,—that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were really God's Holy Word, and were so accounted by Him Who referred to them. The Lord's reference to the words "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,"<sup>9</sup> as having been spoken by God, will occur almost at once as an illustration that perhaps, more than any other, has tended to deepen the impression I am now alluding to.

These are simply a few general impressions. Yet if we paused here, and went no further in our appeal to our Lord on the nature of the Old Testament, would it be easy to resist the conviction that a view of Holy Scripture such as we have considered in the Analytical view could never be in harmony with these impressions? Books, some of them written at a late date for the advancement of the claims and interests of a special class, dramatised compositions, fictitious or rewritten histories,—how little could they deserve to be spoken of in the terms or regarded under the aspects in which, and under which, they were spoken of and regarded by the great Teacher. What a conviction just these few impressions seem to bring home to us that He Who came to bear witness to the truth<sup>10</sup> could never have borne such a witness as that which is implied in what has been already said, if the writings of the Old Testament

<sup>3</sup> John v. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xvi. 16, comp. Matt. xxii. 40, and conversely Matt. xi. 13.

<sup>5</sup> John x. 34.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xxvi. 56.

<sup>7</sup> Luke xviii. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10, *al.*

<sup>9</sup> Matt. xxii. 32; Mark xii. 26.

<sup>10</sup> John xviii. 37.

<sup>1</sup> See Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol i. p. 35 (Edin. 1883).

<sup>2</sup> John vii. 38, comp. ver. 42; x. 55.

really were what they are represented to be by modern analysis!

But impressions are but impressions,—though I know not whether in subjects like the present they may not exercise an influence more truly to be depended on than many a formulated argument. At any rate they have their value, and may deserve to be considered as manifestations of a kind of spiritual instinct that cannot wholly be ignored. Still our appeal to Christ must go much further than this; we must leave impressions and pass onward to those definite statements and inference-bearing utterances which are readily to be found amid the very numerous references of our Lord to the Old Testament.

1. Let us take then, first, that cardinal statement in which, at the very beginning of His ministry, and under circumstances of much solemnity, our Lord distinctly specified His own relation to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and especially to the law, whether in its more restricted or its more exclusive reference. This relation was stated both negatively and affirmatively, in short and precise terms, and corroborated by a further statement marked by a similar directness and precision. The words of our Lord to which we are now referring, as we probably well remember, are from the Sermon on the Mount. They immediately follow the Beatitudes and the short opening address to the disciples, and form in effect the text for the earlier portion of the Sermon. The words are these: "Think not that I come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you,"—observe how attention is solemnly called to what follows,—"Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished."<sup>1</sup>

Words could not be stronger. They were addressed primarily to the disciples, but, as is afterwards clearly indicated,<sup>2</sup> to many of the thronging multitude besides. The intention of the words was to prepare for a right understanding of the illustrations which followed; and, it may be, also to check vague hopes of covenant-changes which old prophecy might seem to justify,<sup>3</sup> and which actually were imputed to St. Stephen a very few years afterwards.<sup>4</sup> Hence the distinctness and

precision of the Lord's declaration. There can indeed hardly be any doubt as to the exact meaning. The only questions that can possibly be raised are in reference to the sense in which the term "the law" is to be understood, and to the nature of the Lord's fulfilment of it. That "the law" cannot be restricted to what is now termed the moral law, as contrasted with the priestly or ceremonial law, seems certain, even though the illustrations are from the moral law, as such a restricted use would be contrary to the use of the word in all similar passages in the New Testament. It can only mean the whole Mosaic law,—the books of the law, as every Jew of the days of our Lord would have understood this term to include and signify. Nor can there be much doubt as to the sense in which Christ speaks of Himself as come to fulfil the law. He fulfilled the law when, whether by word or deed, He set forth its innermost meaning and contents,—all in fact that was designed by God when the law was declared,—or the ceremonies, in obedience to His divine word, enjoined upon the covenant-people. Precepts, enactments, ceremonies, types, and symbolical details, all were to have their essential meaning and purpose brought out by the great Teacher, and to receive their completion and consummation in Him. And from this law thus comprehensive and diversified no jot or tittle was to pass away, until all things should be accomplished, and this present age should melt into the age that is to come.

What a revelation; how suggestive and how full of teaching in reference to questions that are now exercising our thoughts. If Moses the man of God, in obedience to the commandment of God, set forth the law in the varied forms in which it has come down to us, in the books which are associated with his name, such a revelation as that which we are now considering becomes conceivable. We can understand that even the ceremonial, as involving the typical, is to lose no jot or tittle of its spiritual reality until this dispensation pass utterly away. Its very typical connexion with Christ clothes it with what might be termed a provisional perpetuity, an endurance till all things be accomplished. God has spoken, and His word, even in what might be considered as by its very nature only for a time and a season, endures as to its essential and absolute elements. All this we can understand and realise; but it is on the tacit assumption that

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 17, 18; comp. Luke xvi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* vii. 28.

<sup>3</sup> See Jer. xxxi. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Acts vi. 11, 14.

those constantly recurring words in the books of the Law, "And the Lord said unto Moses," are not to be reduced to a mere liturgical formula, but to be accepted as meaning what they say. Deny this, however, directly or inferentially,—imagine the writer of the Exile using the convenient form of words to introduce what he might have thought Moses would have said if the circumstances had ever come before him: in a word, adopt the current theory of the Priestly Code, as it has been set forth in a preceding address, and we find ourselves far in the realm of the unthinkable. That the "idealizations" of the pious Jew of the Exile should be so spoken of by Him, "through Whom come grace and truth,"<sup>1</sup> must seem, at any rate to all plain believers in God's Holy Word, as beyond the possibilities of our conception. For it to be

<sup>1</sup> John i. 17.

possible to entertain such a conception, we must first conceive the idealiser to have been inspired to write as he did write; but an inspiration that can be compatible with continually attributing to God utterances and enactments alleged to have been made to Moses, when they were due only to an interested writer, who was making use of the great Lawgiver's name, is an inspiration that is outside all reasonable and reverent consideration.

We contend, then, that the assumptions involved in the Analytical view relating to the origin of the Priestly Code are not consistent with the solemn declarations of our Lord in reference to the Mosaic law, which we have just been considering. If the Analytical view is to be maintained, much more than the jot and tittle will have to be surrendered to the ever-increasing demands of modern analysis.

## Our Debt to German Theology.

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### IV.

LET us now indicate some of the directions which theological study is now taking in Germany. One touches the beginnings of Christian doctrine. If there is any age that deserves to be called the dark age of Christian history, it is the second century. And yet it is just then that Christianity makes the transition from inspired to uninspired guidance. Then the New Testament comes to recognition, and the outlines of the form which doctrine is to take are being drawn. What were the conditions under which the work was done? This is one of the questions which our day is seeking to answer by collecting and analysing all that remains to us of the Christian writings of that time. Dr. Harnack, of Berlin, is the leader in the inquiry. In his great work on the growth of Dogma, he gives us what he conceives to have been the course which events took. In substance it is the same that is advocated with less apparatus of learning in Dr. Hatch's volume, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages on the Christian Church*. Pfleiderer takes the same line with important divergences.<sup>1</sup> "The Hellenising of the Gospel" plays a great part in the theory. Undoubtedly

<sup>1</sup> In his *Urchristenthum*.

there is an element of truth in the theory represented by this suggestive phrase, just as there was in Baur's exploded theory of Paulinism and Petrinism. The human expression of revelation must be coloured by the mental and moral atmosphere of the countries in which it appears. Judaism is no less an example of this truth than Christianity. But Harnack and Hatch seem to give the impression that the content as well as the form of Christianity is largely Greek. For example, the entire system of Gnosticism is brought within the line of Christian development. Marcion, Valentinus, and other Gnostic teachers, are supposed to have had almost as much to do with the shaping of Christian faith as, say, Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius. If so, Church History has certainly done great injustice to the former. Gnosticism has generally been regarded as outside the Christian line, influencing and borrowing from Christianity as every heresy did, but still itself non-Christian. Now, as matter of fact, which of the characteristic features of Gnosticism passed into the Christian Creed? Its doctrine of creation belonging to the darkness, the emptiness which stands over against the light, the celestial fulness?