

Hebrew Prophecy and Modern Criticism.

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VIII.

'Thus speaketh Jahweh of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of Jahweh: even He shall build the temple of Jahweh: and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.'—ZECH. vi. 12, 13.

WE are accustomed to think of the Messiah under the three aspects of Prophet, Priest, and King. The third of these I have already discussed in my last paper. The first two I wish to speak of in this. Of the prophetic office of the Messiah little need be said. I doubt, indeed, whether, properly speaking, it belongs to my subject at all. There is only one prophecy in the Old Testament which definitely predicts, or seems to definitely predict, the Messiah in the character of a prophet. I refer, of course, to the well-known prediction of Deut. xviii. 15 ff: 'Jahweh thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto Me,' etc. But, except perhaps among the Samaritans,¹ there is no proof that this prophecy was ever, before the founding of Christianity, interpreted of the Messiah.

It is no doubt true that Jesus was known as the 'Prophet from Nazareth' (Matt. xxi. 11), and admitted the applicability of the title 'Prophet' to Himself (St. Luke iv. 24). But it is not the fact itself which is in question. No one can doubt that a large number of Jews recognised in Christ a very exceptional teacher, a prophet at least in the New Testament sense of the word. Some of them also believed him to be the Messiah. But there is nothing to show that, like the Samaritan woman, they thought Him at all more likely to be the Messiah because He was a prophet.

It is also true, of course, that the Jewish people in the time of Christ expected the appearance of some great prophet in connexion with the advent of the Messiah. But, as we gather from more than one passage in St. John's Gospel,² the prophet is clearly distinguished from the Messiah Himself. This expectation seems to have originated from the prophecy in the last chapter of Malachi, which foretold the return of Elijah. The tradition that

¹ See John iv. 25, 29.

² Especially i. 19-21, vii. 40-41. At anyrate these passages point to the Messiah as a person of supernatural knowledge, one, therefore, whose teaching could be trusted.

Jeremiah, and probably some other of the great prophets, would also return appears to have arisen by analogies from this.³ But in Malachi the work of Elijah stands in direct contrast to that of the 'messenger of the covenant.' The latter is to purify by chastisement the sons of Levi, as a preparation for the coming of Jahweh Himself to annihilate the wicked. 'Jahweh, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, behold He cometh, saith Jahweh of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' sope. And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and they shall offer unto Jahweh offerings in righteousness. . . . And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false-swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not Me, saith Jahweh of hosts.'⁴ But the work of Elijah is to avert this judgment by repentance. 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of Jahweh come. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'⁵ Again, if we except this doubtful passage of Deuteronomy, there is none which definitely predicts a great future teacher. There certainly arose no great prophetic ideal at all corresponding to the kingly ideal of which I spoke in my last lecture. The office of the Messianic King is to conquer, to rule, to judge, but not to teach. We may say, of course, that Christ, as a fact, fulfilled the prophecy of Deuteronomy more completely than any one of the great prophets,

³ Matt. xvi. 14.

⁴ Mal. iii. 1-3, 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Jeremiah for example; but we cannot say that the prophetic character was part of the current conception of the Messiah, as foretold by the prophets, and expected by the Jewish people.

It has, however, been maintained¹ that in the time of the Maccabees at any rate the Messianic hope of the Jewish nation was directed towards a prophet. This view is based on two passages, 1 Maccabees iv. 46 and xiv. 41. The first occurs in the description of the cleansing of the sanctuary after its pollution by Antiochus Epiphanes. The question arose, What should be done with the desecrated altar? The priests finally determined to pull it down, and lay up the stones¹ in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them. This only proves that at that time there was a hope that the prophetic order, which had long been in abeyance, would be again restored. The second passage (xiv. 41) is perhaps more to the point. The writer is giving a very full and laudatory account of Simon the Maccabee. He says that 'the Jews and priests were well pleased that Simon should be their high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful prophet.' But even this need mean nothing more than that the priests, or perhaps one should say rather the writer himself, felt that any decision of theirs might be overruled if a really trustworthy prophet should arise. Even if such passages, taken in connexion with those already referred to, justify us in supposing that there did exist among the Jews at times the hope of a Messianic Prophet, this conception was, as it were, spasmodic and altogether independent of the constant hope of the Messianic King.

The same cannot be said of the priestly conception of the Messiah. Though not, it is true, from the first a characteristic of the Coming One, it appears very definitely at that stage in the history of prophecy, which followed the Return from the Captivity. This period was marked by the increased importance which was attached to all connected with the ritual worship of the temple. And, as a result of this, far greater reverence came to be felt for the priests, and especially the high priest. Some commentators have seen in the writings of this period evidence of an antagonistic rivalry between the princely representatives of the royal house and the high priest. At any rate we do certainly find by the side of the old kingly ideal,

¹ As, e.g., by Prof. Cheyne, Bampton Lectures, p. 20.

so frequent in the earlier prophets, the growth of a second ideal, the priestly. This we find reflected in the books of the two contemporary prophets, Haggai and Zechariah.

Haggai, it is true, attaches the highest importance to the princely office. For though in five cases out of the six in which he mentions Zerubbabel he couples with his name that of Joshua, the high priest, yet he invariably mentions Zerubbabel first.² And not only so, but in the last prophecy (ii. 20-23), which is addressed to Zerubbabel alone, he speaks of him in language which is almost Messianic. When God has overthrown all the kingdoms of the nations, 'In that day,' saith Jahweh of hosts, 'will I take thee, O Zerubbabel my servant, the Son of Shealtiel, saith Jahweh and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith Jahweh of hosts.' The thought is that Zerubbabel will reign alone, the darling of God, while all the surrounding nations are powerless to harm.

But in Zechariah, on the other hand, far greater stress is laid comparatively on the sacred character and exalted position of the high priest. In the earlier visions, taken as a whole, the high priest and prince seem to occupy a co-ordinate position. It is Joshua, the high priest, who is acquitted of the charges made by Satan, and stands arrayed in the robes of innocence (chap. iii.). It is Joshua and his fellows who are typically and spiritually connected with the coming of the Branch (iii. 8): 'Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men which are a sign; for behold I will bring forth My Servant the Branch.' Again, it is before Joshua (ver. 9) that the stone is laid, having upon it seven eyes and engraven by Jahweh of hosts. But something very much of the same kind is said also of Zerubbabel in the vision of the golden candlestick in chap. iv. He was to be no mere ordinary prince acting in his own strength, but was to be specially empowered by the Spirit of God (ver. 6): 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jahweh of Hosts.' And by this means all difficulties were to be overcome. 'Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.' On the work of Zerubbabel as he stands with the plummet in his hand, the joy of all beholders, rest those seven eyes of Jahweh (ver. 10). This co-ordination of prince and high

² Hag. i. 1, 12, 14, ii. 2, 4.

priest is still more definite in the explanation of the two olive branches given at the end of this vision (ver. 14). 'These are the two sons of oil, that stand by Jahweh of the whole earth.' Zechariah here seems to see God enshrined in the temple of the world, and ministered to by the two representatives of his worshippers, the high priest and the prince. Even the prince has something of a priestly character.

But later on, in chap. vi. 9-15, we find, or seem to find, a new departure in Zechariah's conception of the relation of the two offices. The high priest and the prince are no longer two ministers of God standing side by side with equal dignity and power; but the offices are united in one person. Or it would be truer to say that the personality of the prince is absorbed in that of the high priest. For it is Joshua, not Zerubbabel, who is the type of this priest-king. It is his head on which the crowns of gold and silver are laid (ver. 11). He is especially pointed out as the type of the Branch (vers. 12, 13). And of the Branch it is expressly said that he is not only to sit and rule, but also to be a Priest upon His throne.

This, at any rate, is the most natural interpretation of this passage. But it must be confessed that a large number of recent commentators have given a different explanation. They argue (1) that the crowns being more than one, were evidently intended for more than one person. They therefore propose to read in ver. 11 'upon the head of Zerubbabel and upon the head of Joshua,' and so make what according to our present text is said of the Branch in the next verse refer to Zerubbabel. In ver. 13 they translate, instead of 'he shall be a priest upon his throne,' 'there shall be a priest upon his throne,' *i.e.* to say, in the future the Prince was to have a Priest sitting beside him at his right hand, if we adopt the LXX.¹ reading, and sharing his government, and the words that follow, 'and the counsel of peace shall be between them both,' would mean that the two would now rule together in perfect harmony. Now, if we could be certain that this interpretation was correct, it would merely show that Zechariah was still contemplating the co-ordination of the two offices, rather than their union in one person. We should have to look for the latter conception at a later date.

But as a fact there are grave objections to this interpretation. (1) It involves an insertion for

¹ In all probability this reading is a gloss from Ps. cx. 1.

which there is no authority whatever, whereas the text as it stands is certainly quite translatable.

(2) It creates as many difficulties as it removes. After saying, in ver. 11, 'Make crowns and set them upon the head of Joshua,' etc., the writer continues in ver. 12, 'And say unto *him*,' *i.e.* obviously to Joshua, as the text stands. But if we make the supposed insertion in the previous verse, and read, 'Place them upon the head of Zerubbabel and upon the head of Joshua,' to whom do the words 'unto him' refer? The commentators I speak of understand them as referring to Zerubbabel. But on grammatical grounds they may just as well, if not better, refer to Joshua. And surely the writer would have avoided this ambiguity, and repeated the name of the person signified. Again, if Zerubbabel is here the type of the coming Branch, it should have been made equally clear that Joshua is the type of the coming High Priest. For this is *ex hypothesi* the sole meaning of their coronation. But the words, 'There shall be a priest upon his throne' would not suggest any connexion whatever between Joshua and the future High Priest. The only real difficulty in taking the text as it stands lies in the words, 'And the counsel of peace shall be between *them both*.' But may not there be an almost unconscious reference to the existing state of things? There was then, or might be in the near future, a rivalry, if not an open antagonism, between the two offices (symbolised respectively by the gold and silver crowns); but when these two were united in one Priest-King such a thing would be impossible.

At this point an important question occurs to us. Is Zechariah here speaking as a prophet or as a politician? Is he foretelling a Messiah, or is he propounding a new scheme of government? Is he describing the priestly character of the coming king, or merely arguing that it would be desirable in the cause of religion, and therefore for the highest welfare of his people, that they should be under the rule of the High Priest? But are we right at all in so sharply dividing these two alternatives? The vision of the Messianic King, as foreseen by the earlier prophets, Isaiah for instance, was in one sense ideal, for it was the rule of one who would perfectly fulfil the conception of theocracy—God's viceregent on earth, a perfect King ruling a perfect people. But they looked forward to this ideal, not as a pleasant dream, but as an actual possibility, something to be striven for, and they saw in the events of their own day God

working for this end. To say, then, that Zechariah's prophecies deal with an ideal future, or an expected Messiah, is not to remove them, to use a modern phrase, out of the sphere of practical politics. He may not have thought that the ideal High Priest, the spiritual Head of the nation, free from all the corruptions of the past, would actually be seen in his own day, but he put forth the idea as what should be the religious aim of the nation. One thing, at any rate, is evident, that by giving the name Branch or Sprout to the person who was to fulfil his ideal, he was appealing to the Messianic hopes already raised in the people by Jeremiah (xxiii. 5). This is all the more significant when we remember that this name was given by Jeremiah to signify that the Messiah was to sprout up from the fallen tree of the house of David. But no such idea is suggested by Zechariah's explanation of the name; he merely says, 'He shall sprout up from His place.' In his view the Sprout is connected, not with the royal house of David, but with the high priesthood. But there is no ground for supposing that he contemplated any change in the family of the high priest.

The state of things which Zechariah foretold began to be fulfilled in its outward aspect soon after his own time. We hear of no representative of David's house succeeding to Zerubbabel; whereas the secular power passed more and more into the hands of the priests. It is true, of course, that in such a high priest as Eliashib, who proved so troublesome a thorn in Nehemiah's side, we have a person very different from Zechariah's ideal; but in spite of such exceptions the high priesthood came in time to be the greatest spiritual and temporal influence in the community. This power reached its climax in the person of Simon the Just, who was regarded by the Jewish people with a veneration such as no high priest either before or after could command. In Ecclus. i. 5-12 we have a beautiful description of the impression which he made as he officiated in his priestly vestments: 'How was he honoured in the midst of the people in his coming out of the sanctuary! He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full: as the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds: and as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, as lilies by the rivers of waters, and as the branches of the frankincense tree in the time of summer: as fire and

incense in the censer, and as a vessel of beaten gold set with all manner of precious stones: and as a fair olive tree budding forth fruit, and as a cypress tree which groweth up to the clouds. When he put on the robe of honour and was clothed with the perfection of glory, when he went up to the holy altar, he made the garment of holiness honourable, when he took the portion out of the priests' hands, he himself stood by the hearth of the altar, compassed with his brethren round about, as a young cedar in Libanus, and as palm trees compassed they him round about.' But Simon was not only an honoured high priest, he was also a great public benefactor. He restored the temple, and rebuilt the city walls, which had been demolished by Ptolemy I. (Soter). He was also one of the most celebrated of Jewish teachers. Later on the great Judas Maccabæus, and his scarcely less heroic brothers, men of Aaronic descent, and the youngest of them, Simon II., ruled the nation as high priest. He completed the work of deliverance from Syria, which his brothers had devoted their lives to achieving, and even if he did not actually receive the *title* of king,¹ he had the reality far more than the titular Judæan kings of a later date.

There is another passage in the Old Testament, which, if not perhaps more important in itself than the prophecies of Zechariah, is at anyrate more familiar. In thinking of the priestly character of the Messiah we naturally turn our thoughts to Ps. cx., and the use made of that psalm in the Epistle to the Hebrews. But there is a great difference between a psalm of this kind and a prophecy. The purpose of the latter is to picture a future ideal towards which the nation should aim; the purpose of a psalm such as this is to celebrate some person or event. The psalm is only prophetic in so far as the poet, in describing the present or the past, paints an idealised picture which is only true of some greater future.² Thus it is most natural to suppose that the second psalm is intended by the writer to celebrate the victory of some living king over his enemies, but in doing so he represents the king as standing in an ideal relationship to God. The same is true of Ps. cx., but with this differ-

¹ The first high priest who bore the title of king appears to have been Aristobulus (see Graetz, *Hist. of the Jews*, Eng. transl. ii. p. 35). So Josephus, but Jannæus is the first on whose coins the name King occurs.

² Cheyne, however (*Psalms in loco*), regards this psalm as directly Messianic, written in the Maccabæan age, but assuming the time of David or Solomon.

ence, that the view of this ideal relationship has changed with the time. In Ps. ii., written apparently in the time of the Jewish monarchy, the King is God's Eternal Son. In Ps. cx., He is God's Eternal Priest.

The latter psalm is conceived in the spirit of the later prophecy of Zechariah (chap. vi.). The writer shews that the rule of the high priest is no new thing, but a restoration of the ancient patriarchal system of which Melchizedek was a well-known example. The person celebrated in the psalm belongs evidently, then, to a late period of Jewish history, and recent critics have given very strong reasons for the view that the priest-king was no other than Simon the Maccabee. There was no one in Jewish history who so thoroughly combined the dignity of the high priesthood with the qualities of a noble ruler, a clever strategist, and a courageous warrior. 1 Macc. xiv. gives us a glowing description of the prosperity of the country under his rule. The language reminds us of the Messianic pictures of the prophets. And when we read (ver. 41) that the Jews and priests were well-pleased that Simon should be their high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful prophet, we cannot but feel that the resemblance to Ps. cx. 4 can hardly be merely a coincidence. 'Jahveh hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.'

This view has been recently confirmed by the discovery of the name Simeon in the initial letters of four consecutive verses of the psalm, making it probable that, like several others, it is an acrostic.¹

This psalm does not add much to Zechariah's conception of the Messiah, except that it blends more completely the new priestly with the old kingly element. He does not merely sit on His throne, a high-priestly ruler, nor, if we adopt the other interpretation of the passage in Zechariah, does He sit beside the King, but as a victorious warrior He crushes His enemies in all directions (vers. 2, 5-7). Still the priestly character of the Messiah is maintained in the description of the warriors who freely devote themselves to the cause of himself and their country. 'Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of Thy power: in the beauties

¹ See *Academy*, Feb. etc., 1892. The chief difficulties lie in the facts (1) that so the name is written defectively שמעון שמוען; and (2) that it is difficult to account for the initial letters of the last three verses, נ, י, and מ.

of holiness from the womb of the morning Thou hast the dew of thy youth'; *i.e.* the young men with armour glistening like the dew resemble a great company of priests in their holy vestments. It is needless to add that the sacred character of the Maccabæan struggle gives a special point to the psalm, if it is referred to Simon. In singing His glory the evidently contemporary psalmist gives us the ideal of the Priest-King, or in other words, of the Messiah, as it existed in the middle of the second century B.C.

It need not surprise us that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews should have used this psalm as though it were a direct prophecy of the eternal priesthood of Christ, without any reference to the typical priest-king of the psalm, whoever he may be. His treatment of the passage not only embodies the Messianic interpretation current among the Jews, but is also in exact keeping with the methods employed throughout his whole treatise.²

But there is a far greater difficulty presented to us in the language of our Lord in Matt. xxii. 41-46. It is not merely that He apparently sets His seal to the current Messianic interpretation of the psalm. That would be no real difficulty. For to recognise the type is not to ignore the Antitype. To see in the psalm a primary reference to Simon is not to forget that Christ more perfectly fulfilled the Messianic ideal which is there pictured. But more than this, Christ accepts the non-critical views of the age, and ascribes the psalm to David, and even founds upon this an important theological argument. It is quite useless to urge, in answer to this difficulty that criticism is a science, and must not be hampered by theological considerations. Theological considerations may be connected with the most vital truths. Suppose, for example, that we were certain that God has said that this psalm was written by David, it would be nothing short of blasphemy to doubt the fact. Again, it is hardly more satisfactory to say that Christ's words are merely an *argumentum ad hominem*, and do not necessarily imply that He Himself recognised the Davidic authorship. To say the least of it, it would be unworthy of Christ's moral dignity to argue from premises which He

² For instance, he argues at some length that the words of Ps. xcvi. 11, 'That they should not enter into My rest' can only refer to the great rest which still awaits the people of God.

knew to be untrue. And, besides, we have precisely the same difficulty in certain passages in our Lord's sayings, which imply that Moses was the author of Deuteronomy,¹ which certainly cannot be explained as *argumenta ad hominem*.

The most natural alternative is to suppose that our Lord's knowledge on these points was really limited by the conditions of the time in which He lived. The *mere supposition* of ignorance cannot be regarded as inadmissible, either on the grounds of Christian doctrine or of reverence, when we bear in mind that He declared Himself ignorant on a subject of great theological importance, namely, the time of His second advent. We must admit then, on Christ's own authority, that the union of the Godhead with the Manhood did not as a fact in all cases preclude His ignorance as man. It should, of course, be distinctly borne in mind that our Lord's conclusion—the superiority of the Messiah to David—does not really depend for its truth on any argument drawn from Ps. cx.

¹ E.g. Matt. xix. 8; Mark x. 3.

Many explanations have been suggested on theological grounds, to account for our Lord's ignorance. But, after all, is not this the most humble and reverent attitude to take?—to confess honestly that the union of an omniscient Godhead and a limited humanity in one Person absolutely transcends our human faculties; and that we therefore cannot say *à priori* what limitations to the one nature or the other, from our point of view, that union necessarily involved. It is enough for us that there were limitations, at any rate humanly speaking, to the *ἐνέργεια* of the divine nature. This is abundantly evident from the Gospel record of Him who needed to grow in wisdom as well as in stature, and who, in the startling language of St. Paul, being from the beginning in the form of God, emptied Himself and took the form of a slave, and was found in the fashion of a man.² What more striking example could we find of the difficulty of conceiving and representing divine truth under the limitation of human thought and human language!

² Phil. ii. 7, 8.

The Laws of the Family.

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IN Oriental social life as known to us from modern examples, the estimate formed of women's position is not by any means a high one. This is, of course, largely due to the peculiar, and indeed in some measure inexplicable, tenets of Moham-medanism. These are inexplicable when we consider the powerful influence which women such as Ayesha and others exercised in its early days, and of the still more prominent part which women had taken in tribal government in the more remote periods of Arab history. The queen of Sheba was but a successor of the queens of Punt, the 'Holy land' of the Egyptians, whose portrait we find on the walls of the temple built by Queen Hatsepsu at Deir-el-Bahri. So also from Assyrian records we have the mention of the queens of the Arabs. So that the position of women according to the creed of Islam, is certainly not in accordance with the usual teachings of Semitic thought.

In the oldest civilisation of Chaldea we find quite another aspect. As also we do in the soci-

ology of the Pyramid times in Egypt. The mother and wife were held in the highest esteem. This is in some measure, as I have already said, in Chaldea due to the existence of the law of maternal descent, which certainly held good among the Akkadians, but its ready continuance and adoption among the Semitic people shows that it cannot have been entirely strange to them. In the syllabaries or dictionaries we find the name of the mother explained by the title *Ilat biti*, 'goddess of the house,' and this being indeed the position which she held. The tablet of social laws so often quoted has been questioned by some; that it was only a theoretical code, and not that in actual use; but this idea is entirely removed by the tablets found in Chaldea which belong to the days of Abram. These show clearly that most of the laws recorded in this tablet were in force among the people at that time. The position of the mother as set forth in these deeds is a very high one. Although the husband had absolute power to divorce his