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## The Christ of Jewish Expectation— and the Christ who came.

THE purpose in view in this article is to exhibit the conceptions of the Messiah which were held by Old Testament prophets and the authors of the apocryphal and apocalyptic books and to contrast the pictures which they painted with the reality. No account will be given here of Rabbinical ideas because the present writer has no first-hand knowledge of them.

### I

The expectation of a glorious coming Sovereign born of David's house and sitting on David's throne runs through a considerable section of Old Testament prophecy. Micah speaks of a ruler who will come forth unto God, i.e. for His purposes, from Bethlehem, and it is probable that he was thinking not of a peasant prince, as G. A. Smith suggests, but of a Davidic monarch. The writer of the great prophecy in Isaiah xi. declares in plain words that the coming ruler will arise from the family of Jesse. Jeremiah announces in God's name that He is intending to raise up to David a righteous "shoot" who will reign as king. Ezekiel speaks of a coming prince who will bear the name of David. The same prince is referred to in the great evangelical chapter, Isaiah lv. Zechariah takes up Jeremiah's word "Shoot." In Psalms ii, lxii., and cx., the same hope of a great coming monarch is in evidence, and in the book of Daniel "the anointed one, the prince" appears.

In this statement the writer has been concerned to observe the sound canon laid down by V. H. Stanton in the *Hastings Dictionary* article, "In a historical survey we must be careful not to attribute greater distinctness or scope to the expectation than had at that time been attained." In accordance with this rule it must be added here that Micah expected the Messiah soon, if verse 5 is to be read, with the English versions, "This man be our peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land," and the same is true of Zechariah. Micah's meaning is, however, uncertain. Powis Smith says, "*This* refers to the following, not the preceding, context." Dr. Stanton in the article just referred to says that Jeremiah dwells upon "the renewed glory of the house of David and not one pre-eminent king of David's line." This is too decided. Jeremiah *does* speak of princes, but it certainly looks as though in xxiii. 5 he expresses his belief in one outstanding Sovereign, the hope of Israel. That expectation is not universal in the prophetic writings, but as our brief survey shows, it is

widespread. In view of that fact, the silence of many of the later writers is remarkable. In the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic books, about fifty distinct contributors are in evidence, and in not more than about one in four do we find any reference to the coming one. Westcott's view was that this silence may be accounted for by the nature of their themes. Ezra and Nehemiah, for example, do not mention Messiah. It must be admitted that this is true so far as some of these writers are concerned. They had no hope of any coming Kingdom of God on earth. But consider such a book as Tobit whose author, though not free from ridiculous ideas, was nevertheless a great catholic soul. "Many nations," he says, "shall come from far to the name of the Lord God with gifts in their hands." Or take Ben Sira, whose noble idea of God is expressed in the words, "The mercy of a man is upon his neighbour, but the mercy of the Lord is upon all flesh; reproving and chastening and teaching and bringing again as a shepherd doth his flock." He foretells in Ecclesiasticus xxiv. 30-32, and xxxvi. 17, the coming days when Wisdom will be the light of mankind and all they that are on the earth shall know that Israel's God is the Lord, the eternal God. Now in these and other books containing similar ideas, we might well expect to find Messiah a prominent figure, but instead He is conspicuous by His absence, and this is all the more remarkable in books like Tobit, in which God is represented as using angelic intermediaries. We are forced to conclude that by some of these writers the idea of a coming Messiah was not held. Of those among them who refer to Him, one has nothing to say of "God's Son, Christ" except that He "shall rejoice" men 400 years and then die with all creatures. Quite a number, however, have still less to say. They assign no function in the world to the Christ. To them He is a sort of lay figure. He only appears in their pages because the idea of Him is part of the traditional faith.

## II

In the Old Testament Scriptures, Messiah is described as a purely human person. Even the great names in Isaiah ix. 6 do not really predicate Deity of Him, and although Jeremiah calls Him "The Lord our righteousness," it is necessary to observe that Jerusalem receives from him the same name. We who hold the Deity of Christ—we who can make our own the words of Phillips Brooks, uttered by him in a private prayer, "O Lord Jesus, Thou hast filled my life with joy and peace, and to look on Thy face is earth's most exquisite delight"—must be careful not to read into the words of prophets what is not really there. If the Messiah had been spoken of in either of these passages as God Incarnate the case would be without any clear parallel in

the Old Testament, for Psalm xlv. 6 is ambiguous. Moreover, the functions which the Messiah was to discharge were the normal ones of a sovereign, and for them He was to be equipped by the Spirit of God. When it is said that He will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and that He will slay the wicked with the breath of His life, one's first impression is that He is conceived of as one endowed with awful supernatural powers. But the passage is patient of a different interpretation. It is surely understood more correctly if it is regarded as vivid oriental poetry. It tells us that the King's condemning word when He sits in judgment will be authoritative for the punishment of ill-doers. In the later literature, the common view is much the same. One writer in the time when the Maccabees were reigning thought that the great hope would find its fulfilment in one of the sovereigns of that priestly line. He pictured Messiah as arising from the tribe of Levi. After the Pharisees had quarrelled with John Hyrcanus, this writer's work was revised and the older view of Messiah as coming from the tribe of Judah was again put forward. These men like most of their fellows did not dream of a Divine Christ. But in St. John vii. 37 we have evidence of quite a different conception, "We know whence this man is, but when the Christ cometh no man knows whence He is." More than once in the Apocrypha Messiah is spoken of in that way. He is not thought of as David's Son, born in Bethlehem, but as a mysterious person who is "to be revealed." He is "the Anointed One whom the Most High hath kept unto the end of the days." He is not a man though he has "as it were the likeness of a man." He rises out of the sea, flies with the clouds of heaven, and causes all things to tremble when He looks at them." In one Apocalyptic book—Eth. Enoch 37-70—he is represented as sitting on God's throne and as one "chosen and hidden before God before the creation of the world." In such books as the so-called *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and that Psalter of the Pharisees which bears the name *Psalms of Solomon*, the Messiah is great, yet he is only a man. But Dr. Edersheim's words as to the author of Enoch 37-70 are just. This man appears to have regarded the Christ as far above the ordinary, human, royal, prophetic, and even angelic type, to such an extent that the boundary line separating it from Divine Personality is of the narrowest." The later literature therefore gives us two diametrically opposite views as to the nature of the Messiah.

### III

Sometimes, but by no means always, Messiah is thought of by the prophets as exercising a world-wide sway. There is no such thought in Jeremiah, and of Micah's Prince it is only said

that He will be famous to the ends of the earth. But Psalms ii. and lxxii. distinctly foreshadow a universal rule for Him, and in Isaiah xi, which the present writer understands not of animal regeneration but of a beneficial change in human kind set forth in the language of glowing poetry, the prophet seems clearly to anticipate that the coming Hebrew prince will create world-wide international harmony. Moreover, in verse 10 of that chapter, it is said that the nations will consult him. That is his purpose. He stands for a signal or banner of the peoples.

It is commonly a political deliverance, a national salvation, that is thought of when Messiah is spoken about. Our Lord served Himself heir to Jeremiah's wonderful prophecy of the new covenant, but no word of the prophet himself indicates that he so thought of the "Shoot." For him the reign of the coming one was to be a time of safety and justice in the land. For Ezekiel it was to be an era of national prosperity, abounding fruit and freedom from famine and from war. So in Micah the Messianic deliverance is political. Whitehouse held that the words rendered "mighty God" in Isaiah ix. 6 point to great military achievements, and it is possible that the same idea is in evidence in Micah v. 5, "This man shall be our peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land." In Ezekiel xxxvii. 23f, it is said that under his reign Israel will be a people obedient to God, but the Messianic sovereign is never described in express terms as the spiritual Saviour of His people. In the Ezekiel passage just referred to it is said that God Himself will cleanse them from their defilements.

In the later writings, the Messiah is sometimes regarded as the destroyer of the wicked. He is possessed of supernatural powers, and with these He slays ungodly nations. His coming means the overthrow of Israel's enemies. There are two writers whose idea of Him is that He will be the judge holding solemn assize to which all mankind will be summoned. But I find only one passage in Apocalyptic in which the idea of the Christ as a kind of Jewish Caesar mastering his foes by the sword, appears in express terms. This may have been the view of two others, but it is not clearly so.

They were all looking for a king,  
To slay their foes and lift them high;  
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing,  
That made a woman cry.

It would not be correct to say that of all the later Jewish writers. Most of them do not indeed picture Him as the spiritual redeemer and hope of the world. For some He is the patron and champion of Israel only and the unpytting judge of nations outside

the pale. Where a more hopeful view is taken the Messiah is not presented to us as the agent of God for human regeneration. There are, however, three writers who are exceptions to the rule. One describes Messiah as the Saviour of mankind. He will turn disobedient hearts to the Lord. In his days sin will come to an end. The Gentiles will be enlightened. A second man speaks of Him as the stay of the righteous, the hope of the troubled, and the light of the Gentiles. A third prophesies widespread conversions under Messiah—"The Gentiles shall praise the Lord openly over all the earth."

## IV

In one sacred and familiar series of passages in the Old Testament, we have the picture of a servant of the Lord who is very unlike the monarch of whom Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Zechariah, and Ezekiel speak. It is clear that that servant of the Lord is sometimes Israel the nation. But in some passages the servant is distinct from the nation. In Isaiah lii. 13—liii., a great individual comes into view and to Christian thought he is none other than our Lord and Master. Certainly that word of prophecy finds its fulfilment only in Him. But that picture of the suffering servant had no influence on the ideas of the men who wrote apocalyptic books. In the *Encyclopædia Biblica* article on the subject, the writer says that the Rabbinical idea of a Messiah Ben-Joseph who dies for Israel and who is subordinate to the victorious son of David, is almost certainly the product of a polemic with Christianity. It is "to say the least unproved and highly improbable that Jews in our Lord's time believed in a suffering and atoning Messiah."

## V

A delightful passage concerning Christ appears in the Second Book of Esdras. "I, Esdras, saw upon the Mount Sion a great multitude, whom I could not number, and they all praised the Lord with songs. And in the midst of them there was a young man of high stature, taller than all the rest, and upon every one of their heads he set crowns and was more exalted; whereat I marvelled greatly. So I asked the angel and said, 'What are these, my Lord?' He answered and said unto me, 'These be they that have put off the mortal clothing and put on the immortal and have confessed the name of God; now are they crowned and receive palms.' Then said I unto the angel, 'What young man is he that setteth crowns upon them and giveth them palms in their hands?' So he answered and said unto me, 'It is the Son of God whom they have confessed in the world.' Then began I greatly to commend them that stood so stiffly for the name of the Lord."

This is a passage which must not be used in an attempt to ascertain the Messianic ideas of Jews. It is the work of a Christian.

## VI

How completely our Lord revolutionized the Messianic conceptions of His predecessors! He adopted indeed the title "Son of Man" found in Enoch and in Daniel. But how strange are some of the predicates which He attaches to the title. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." The men who came before Christ did not dream of One who would serve humanity in such a humble fashion, and none save the author of Isaiah liii. conceived of a Messiah who would lay down His life as a sacrifice for sin. They did not think of a Christ so lowly. Nor did they ever imagine One so majestic as our Lord was. We have seen that one apocalypticist went very far in this direction, but so far as most of the writers are concerned nothing could be further from their minds than the idea of a Messiah who would be God manifest in the flesh. God always gives believing men better gifts than they ever anticipate. He is better to us than our deserts or our hopes. It was so when at last He gave Christ. The Reality was high above the thoughts of men as the heavens are high above the earth.

H. J. WICKS.

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## A Subjective Faith—Its Methods and Consequences.

ONE of the biggest words that has gained currency in religious circles is the word "Faith." It makes an equally strong appeal to all types of Christian men; to the man who is conservative in his religious thinking, and to the man whom we label "modern." But in each case its meaning, its application, the range of ideas which it includes may be widely different. For the theological superstructures which have been built upon this one foundation are legion. Faith itself, however, rests upon another foundation, and however diverse the forms of its interpretation may be, there is underneath them all a basic principle. Perhaps, after all, the basic principle is of more importance than