

J. Rendel Harris – 1925

The general problem of the influence of the Old Testament on the New has been the subject of a multitude of investigations, undertaken from different points of view, and dating from the earliest days of the Christian Church. Such studies were both natural and necessary, if the dictum of the Church that the Holy Ghost spake by the Prophets was to acquire creedal value. Our concern here, however, is with but one aspect of the subject, namely, some quotations from the Old which are embodied in the New. In modern Greek Testaments, the presence of such quotations in the text is usually indicated by a change of type, leading the reader at once to the Hebrew original, or, more commonly, to the related text of the Septuagint. If, on the other hand, we were in possession of a copy of Marcion's New Testament, we should not find any variety of type, or marginal references suggestive of other sources. Quotations from the Old Testament, or any reference to it as an authority would have been fatal to Marcion's theological theory, so he simplified matters by omitting such dogmatic references from his version of the gospel. Some, indeed, slipped in, in spite of him (he would have been very lynx-eyed to detect them all), and these became arrows, for use against him, by Tertullian and other controversialists. Perhaps, then, the actual practice of making marginal references had, in the first instance, a controversial intention. However that may be, it would be easy to show that there is, of necessity much theology involved in these O. T. texts and their associated marginal references. Often, too, they serve to correct the text of the N.T. itself from transcriptional or other errors.

There is one direction in which it seems probable that results of definite theological value may be obtained from the quotations and the marginalia. We may raise the question of particular books, and the evidence for particular themes. The subject of Isaiah's influence on N.T. writers comes under the one head; that of the Suffering Servant under the other. If we treat them together, we must do so under the title 'What Christ and His disciples thought of Isaiah, and what in particular, was the use that they made of the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter.' The study might yield some valuable results. One reason for making such a statement lies in the fact that the student will soon be able to verify (what might indeed have been assumed that the treatment of the O. T. in the N. T. is unequal. There are large sections of its text from which nothing has been borrowed, and there are others which have been the subject of special attention, the reason of which we are sometimes able to divine.

For example, there are two adjacent chapters in Deuteronomy, containing respec-

tively what are called the *Song of Moses* and the *Blessing of Moses*. Of these two chapters the former is credited by Dr. Hort with four times as many quotations in the N. T. as the latter. Admit that the former is a good deal longer than the other, there is still a disproportion in the number of quotations which sets us on the search for its cause. Why should the one be more used than the other as a source of authoritative appeal? When we examine the *Song* by the side of the *Blessing*, the difference between them stands out clearly. The *Song* is almost the opposite of blessing: it is 'near to cursing'; for it contains a catalogue of the aberrations of the chosen people, and adjusts Divine judgments to them; misfortunes are read in the light of misdeeds; infidelities and their consequences are described in detail. In this fact we find the answer to our question. The plenitude of quotations from the *Song* is due to the material it furnishes for an arraignment of the Jewish people; it is a natural treasury for *Tesitimonia adversus Judæos*.

We can verify this hypothesis in a number of ways. Suppose we turn to Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, and examine whether he makes any use of the *Song* or of the *Blessing*: the *index locorum* will show us at once that he quotes the *Song* on nine occasions, involving the following verses <sup>4.7-9, 15. 16-23, 30</sup> (four times), and <sup>43</sup>; on the other hand, the *Blessing* is only twice referred to, and the quotation covers some three verses. This shows that the same preference for quotation from the *Song* prevails in the *Dialogue* as in the New Testament generally. In the case of the former, of course, we are definitely concerned with anti-Judaic propaganda and the exigencies of anti-Judaic controversy. It seems natural, therefore, to infer that when the *Song* is quoted in the N. T., the probability is in favour of the belief that the quotation is used anti-Judaically. The importance of this consideration will appear if we take an actual case of such quotations. In Ph 2 <sup>15</sup> the Apostle desires that his disciples may be the 'blameless children of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.' Here modern editors point out by indications in the type used, that there is a reference to Dt 32 <sup>5</sup> in the text of the LXX, where Moses speaks of the Israelites as being 'no children of God, blameworthy, a crooked and perverse generation':

οὐκ αὐτῷ τέκνα, μωμητά·  
γενεὰ σκολιὰ καὶ διεστραμμένη.

Now let us see how Lightfoot will comment upon the observed parallel: he says, 'A direct contrast to the Israelites in the desert, who in the song of Moses are described, etc.' No doubt that is correct as far as it goes, but it will be much more vivid and to the point at the moment when St. Paul is writing, if for 'Israelites in the desert' we understand 'the Jews among whom you live'; and, indeed, St. Paul has made that

interpretation 'in the midst of' before the crooked and perverse people, though he saw them also as the inheritors of an unbroken tradition of collective infidelity. The children were doing what the fathers had done.

This instance of anti-Judaism in the text of Philippians is but one out of a complex of O. T. testimonies against the chosen people. We will take another illustration to show how the recognition of this complex will help us even in the editing of the text of the N. T. In I Co 10 St. Paul is resolving cases of conscience for the new community, and, in particular, the question of the use that may lawfully be made of meat that has been associated with idolatrous worship. Here, at least, we might expect freedom from hostility to Judaism or of any anti-Judaic reminiscences. We should expect, *a priori*, that both the Gentile and the Judaizer would be in agreement on the question at issue, would feel the same difficulty and accept the same solution. Or, if it should be objected that persons of Jewish extraction or Jewish sympathy would naturally eat Kosher meat, and therefore must be reckoned as outside the discussion, that would be an additional reason for regarding the chapter to which we are referring, as containing and resolving Gentile perplexities in a Gentile environment. But let us see what really goes on in the mind of the Apostle. Instead of ignoring the Jews, he drags them into the discussion. He tells his inquirers to 'observe the carnal Israel!' That is a hostile opening. Then he proceeds to quote the *Song of Moses* in the words: 'What they sacrifice is worship of devils, not of God.' This is Dt 32<sup>17</sup>, with only a change of tense; and it is clear that the subject of the word 'sacrifice' is the carnal Israel. This startling conclusion is evaded by most of the N. T. MSS, which insert the words 'the Gentiles' before the verb, so as to read ἃ θύει [ τὰ ἔθνη ], δαιμονίοις θύει καὶ οὐ Θεῷ instead of ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις θύουσιν.

Now let us turn to Cyprian's *Testimonies* (i. 1), where we find him opening his classical anti-Judaic campaign in these words: *Item in Deuteronomio: Sacrificaverunt [sc. Judæi] – daimoniis et non Deo.* It is clear, then, that in I Co 10 St. Paul is quoting an anti-Judaic testimony, already current in his own time. The scribes of the Epistle, at a later date, could not believe that he was using the words in their original application, and they amended the text; in which course they have been followed by the English Revisers, and, with some hesitation expressed in a bracket, by Dr. Hort.

To show further how the mind of the Apostle was dominated by the text of Deuteronomy, we may notice that he sums up his argument against sacrifices and participation in them, in the words, 'Are we going to *provoke the Lord to jealousy*'? This again is a parallel with the *Song of Moses*, in which it is said that they (*i.e.* the Jews) provoked the Lord to jealousy with non-God, and irritated him with their idols. The

Apostle is asking the new believers whether they are going to fall into the same condemnation through idolatry as the Jews were in and continue under. Evidently the condemnatory words were familiar to his mind; the theme that the Jews had provoked God was already a commonplace. If we are in any doubt as to the anti-Judaism of these quotations, we have only to observe that in the great repository of anti-Judaic matter in the Epistle to the Romans we have the further sequence (Ro 10<sup>19</sup>) where Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy with a non-nation: with a foolish nation I will enrage you.'

Now let us see how this passage is used by the early Christian Apologists. Aphrahat the Persian, in his eleventh homily entitled *On Circumcision*, says that Moses, in that *Hymn of Testimony*, points out the people of the Gentiles, and says, 'I will provoke you to jealousy by a people that is not a people.' Here we notice not only the use of the quotation in an anti-Judaic sense, but the description of the whole as a *Song of Testimony*. There can be no doubt about this; for in the previous sentences Aphrahat says, 'Moses, their leader, testified against them. ...' In the *Hymn of Testimony* he said again, 'Your vine is from the vine of Sodom, etc' (Dt 32<sup>32</sup>). Clearly Aphrahat regards the *Song of Moses* as a storehouse of anti-Judaic arguments. The quotation is repeated in his 16<sup>th</sup> homily, which is a demonstration that 'the peoples' have been substituted for 'the People'; here again he says, 'In the *Song of Testimony* (Moses) says to the people: I will provoke you to jealousy, etc.' (*Dem.* 16, I.).

The student of testimonies will find frequent use made of these Deuteronomic passages in Justin, in Greg. Nyss., in Bar Salibi, etc. As the last-named writer's work is not yet published, we give one quotation from his *Testimonies against the Jews*: 'Listen to Moses how he said: Israel hath grown fat and got prominent eyes: he waxed fat and grew strong and he obtained riches and he forgot God who made him. I also will make him jealous with not-my-people, and with a foolish people I will provoke him to anger.' Perhaps enough has now been said to show the strength of the influence of the *Ode* or *Song of Moses* on the N. T.

How far back is this anti-Judaic use of O. T. passages traceable? The question is an important one. Two opposed opinions prevail at present; one inclined to regard the definite massing and ordering of such polemical matter, as little, if at all, earlier than the days of Cyprian; the other which affirms that these texts formed part of the earliest Christian propaganda, that this use of them is reflected in the N. T. literature, and may, with reason, be credited to the Apostles themselves; perhaps, even to their Master.

In the particular case we have been considering, that of the *Song of Moses*, the

evidence certainly points to its early polemical use, but was it used earlier than by St. Paul? Is there any trace of it in the Gospels in the language of Jesus?

Here is an interesting case which has recently attracted the attention of the textual critics. In Lk 9<sup>41</sup> the Lord addresses the crowd which had gathered round Him on His descent from the Mount of Transfiguration as a 'faithless and perverse generation.' This is not very remote from the 'crooked and perverse ( διεστραμμένη ) generation' of Dt 32<sup>5</sup>. At this point two of the oldest Western MSS omit the words 'and perverse.' Professor Burkitt, reviewing Streeter's new book in the *Journal of Theological Studies* for April 1925, suggests that the Western omission is right, and that the added words have been introduced by parallelization from Dt 32<sup>5</sup>. 'The geographically Western text is right,' according to Burkitt. He has, however, overlooked the fact that there is a closer reference in the *Song* than the one which he quotes. In v.<sup>20</sup> the Jews are described as 'a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith':  
 γεγενεα διεστραμμένη ἐστίν· νιοί οἷς οὐκ ἔστιν πίστις ἐν αὐτοῖς.

This is much nearer to the language of Jesus than the 'crooked and perverse generation,' and therefore if the text of the Gospel has been discoloured from the *Song*, this is the passage to refer to. But in that case it does not look like a scribe's variation taken from the LXX, but a free quotation. In other words, it is the original text of the Gospel, and is a formula of Jesus Himself. So we have one more suggestion of His polemical use of the O. T.

The discovery that Aphrahat the Persian employs extracts from Dt 32 in an anti-Judaic manner, saying that they are taken from a *Song of Testimony* would, of itself, be almost sufficient to prove that he had access, not only to the text of Deuteronomy, but also to some tabulated extracts from the same source. We can, however, carry our investigation a step further, for the very expression, 'Song of Testimony,' is taken from the previous chapter of Deuteronomy. Here we find Moses himself saying, 'Write this song ... that this song may be a *witness for me against the children of Israel*' (Dt 31<sup>19</sup>); and again, 'This song shall *testify against them for a witness*' (Dt 31<sup>21</sup>).

The origin, then, of the expression *Testimonia adversus Judæos* is not to be looked for in Cyprian, or in any other of the sub-Apostolic fathers; it comes from the Scripture itself. It is a Mosaic creation. The formation of a collection of Testimonies began with the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy, and may very well have opened with 'Moses says.' The anti-Judaists had Scripture on their side and the Jewish legislator himself for their inspiration.

We may test the accuracy of his conclusion by examining the way in which Justin

Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho* introduces his quotations from the *Song of Moses* (for, as we have shown above, Justin has the same tendency as the N.T. itself, to quote from the *Song* rather than the *Blessing*). For instance, in c. 20 we find him criticizing the Israelite people as follows: ‘You were prone and very ready to depart from his knowledge, as *Moses also declares*, that “the people ate and drank and rose up to play”’ (Ex 32<sup>6</sup>); and again: ‘Jacob ate and was satisfied, and waxed fat, and he who was beloved kicked: he waxed fat, he grew thick, he was enlarged; and he forsook God who had made him’ (Dt 32<sup>13</sup>). The passage is interesting as showing that, when St. Paul quotes Ex 32<sup>6</sup> in I Co 10<sup>8</sup>, he is working in a Testimony. Similarly, in c. 130, Justin introduces his Testimony by saying, ‘I wish to add some other passages *from the very words of Moses*,’ and in the opening of c. 30 he says, ‘I will now adduce some passages which I had not recounted before. They are recorded by *that faithful servant Moses* in parable and are as follows: “Rejoice, O ye heavens, with Him, and let all the angels of God worship Him, etc.”’ This quotation is specially important because it shows not only that Moses is made responsible for the *Song of Testimony*, and is introduced as the speaker into the *Dialogue*, but as showing once more that the verse in the opening chapter of Hebrews (‘Let all the angels of God worship him’), as well as St. Paul’s quotation in Ro 15<sup>10</sup> (‘Rejoice, ye Gentiles with his people’), are taken from the *Testimonies* involved and contained in the *Song of Moses*.

In the same manner in *Dial.*, c. 119, Justin quotes eight verses from the *Song*, beginning thus: ‘That the *saying of Moses* might be fulfilled, they provoked me with strange gods, etc.’ where the N. T. parallels should again be noted. It is clear, then, that Moses and his *Song* are the point of departure for the earliest collection of *Testimonies*.

If our reasonings are correct, and we have found the right view-point from which to study the collection of *Testimonies*, we can easily picture the evolution of the early anti-Judaic literature. Our starting-point is the *Song of Moses* in the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy, but we have shown that there is, in the 31<sup>st</sup> chapter of the same book, a wider outlook than that revealed in the *Song*. For Moses completes his instructions as to the use of the *Song*, with a command: viz. that this book of the law, to wit, Deuteronomy on the large scale, is to be laid up in or beside the ark, *that it may be there for a witness against thee*. Thus the reader is invited to use the whole book anti-Judaically, and not merely the *Song*. That the Christians did so may be seen from the following extracts taken from the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* (p. 89): ‘For this very reason Moses, wailing and lamenting over you, *testified of these things in Deuteronomy, and more especially in the Song*. Yea! In the *Song*, too, he spoke of the Gentiles and visaged their return to God.’ We may take this to be a fair representation of the evolution of the controversy between Jews and Christians. Its first

source is the *Song of Moses*: its chief characteristic is to stress the infidelity of the Jews and their ingratitude. It is significant that this is also the accusation of Cyprian, in his first book of *Testimonies*, which begins with the statement that the Jews have been guilty of grave offence against God, in forsaking he Lord and following idols; a fair summary of the assertions in the *Song*, where we are told that 'Jacob deserted God who make him,' 'provoked God with strange gods,' 'deserted God who begat him,' 'provoked God with their idols.' Moreover Cyprian, as we have seen, almost immediately quotes a proof-text, '*Item in Deuteronomio, Sacrificaverunt dæmoniis et non Deo.*'

Justin Martyr, too, gives extended proof of Jewish infidelity, starting from the words of the *Song*, and proving also that the believing Gentiles are the true Israel and people of God, concludes with the injunction, 'Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people,' as St. Paul does in the Epistle to the Romans (Ro 15<sup>10</sup>). The *Song*, then, was the basis of controversy and of polemical denunciation at an earlier date than that of the Pauline Epistles.

In conclusion, let us notice how the new point of view with regard to the influence of the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy upon early Christian theology will clarify the interpretation of a passage in the Apocalypse. We have seen (and the evidence might easily be added to) that the early Apologists and Controversialists deduced, from the words of Moses, the doctrine that the Gentiles had come into the Divine Inheritance, and were the true Israel of God. Now in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Apocalypse we have one of the *Songs of Victory* which is sung in the regions celestial. It is called by the writer the *Song of Moses and the Lamb*; and it has been the custom of commentators to explain that this song has its parallel in the exultation of the Israelites on the shores of the Red Sea. In view of our study, the parallel appears to be erroneous. The *Song of Moses*, as we have seen, is the 32<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy. The writer, indeed, reveals his sources. He says, '*Great and true are all thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are all thy ways, O King of the Gentiles: ... The Gentiles shall come and worship before thee. ...*' The expression italicized are clearly under the influence of Dt 32<sup>4</sup>, 'God, his works are true, and all his ways judgment.' Moreover, we have seen that the first generation of Christians argued from this very chapter the entrance of the Gentiles into the inheritance of the Chosen People. This fact has been lost sight of by interpreters of the Apocalypse. For ourselves, we trust we have succeeded in showing in some measure at least, the important place which the *Song of Moses* occupies in the early Christian literature.