











THE AUTHENTICITY AND MESSIANIC  
INTERPRETATION

OF THE

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH

VINDICATED IN A COURSE OF SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

BY THE

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## PREFACE.

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THE following course of Sermons originated in my having been appointed to preach the annual discourse upon the Jewish Interpretation of Prophecy in 1858; and shortly afterwards as Select Preacher I continued the subject, only with a wider application, so as to include German as well as Jewish neology. In preparing them for the press the first sermon necessarily has been recast, the matter in the opening part now forming the Introduction, while to complete the subject I have appended Sermon II., which was never delivered. I have also restored several passages omitted for fear of too great length, and for the sake of clearness have put straightforward names instead of the periphrases usual in the pulpit. Any one acquainted with German literature will see how greatly I am indebted to Drechsler, Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Reinke, Rückert, Stier, and others, not to mention the chief neologian commentators, Gesenius, Hitzig, and Knobel, and names so well known to every student of Hebrew as Ewald and E. Meier. I have also read with great advantage Dr. Alexander's "Commentary," and the translation and learned notes of Dr. Henderson.

OXFORD,  
*January, 1862.*



## INTRODUCTION.

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IN estimating the strength of the evidence offered by prophecy to the mission of our Lord, it is necessary to remember that it is cumulative. Its force does not depend upon any single passage, however clear and distinct, but upon the combined effect of numerous passages, spoken by a multitude of writers, at great intervals of time and under very different circumstances, yet all uniting in one great and harmonious whole. Like the doctrines of the New Testament, its manner is entirely unartificial: it is given here a line and there a line, without method or arrangement; there is no appearance of plan, or forethought, or contrivance; and yet there is no contradiction, no irreconcilable divergency of statements, no portions which undeniably are at variance with the rest. To many, perhaps, used to read their Bible as a whole, this fact may not seem remarkable; nor is it remarkable if the Bible be the Word of God, and if His Holy Spirit watched over the gradual formation of that book which was to be the revelation of God's will to mankind; but upon any other supposition it is incapable of explanation. If the Bible be an ordinary book, the result of unaided human reason, and to be classed with the Vedas, the Avesta, and the Koran, it is an inexplicable fact that, made up as it is of writings which extend over a period of fifteen hun-

dred years, there should be throughout an unmistakeable convergency towards one main conclusion. It is the character of the religions which men invent, that they begin purely and end in corruption. They start with the earnest endeavour to reform the wrong doings of their times, but no sooner has success attended them, than the selfish and unscrupulous use them as means of ministering to their own evil designs. On the contrary, in the Old Testament Scriptures it is always a growing light; a progress in knowledge, in morality, in holiness, and a gradual preparation for what we believe to be God's best and final revelation to mankind. No change of circumstances makes them deviate from their settled course. It matters nothing whether the Israelites be nomads in the desert, or the busy citizens of Solomon's peaceful empire; the anarchy of the judges, the almost total conquest of the nation by the Philistines, the wars of David, the luxurious repose of his successor, the subsequent gradual declension of the realm, the apostacy of its monarchs, the debasement of the people, their exile and restoration,—all these things and the like fail in corrupting the morality or lowering the spiritual insight of this long series of Jewish writers. But with all this they had no conscious purpose or knowledge of the final tendencies of their works: each had his own present business, and addressed himself to the immediate wants and needs of his days. Moses was intent upon forming into a nation the nomad hordes, debased by a long subjection, whom he led out of Egypt; but the forms of worship which he



established all looked forward to and typified that future sacrifice by which an atonement was made for the sins of the world, and from time to time he records promises and gives utterance to prophecies which mark out the whole outline of the Messiah's office. In time these hordes become a powerful nation, and the worship celebrated of old in the wilderness in a tent is now offered unto God with all the splendour of a magnificent ritual; and their two great kings, David and Solomon, write choral odes for the temple service: the one pours forth the troubled griefs of many anxious years of persecution and suffering, and his words pass on beyond his own sorrows, and tell us of the Passion of our Lord; the other describes a king ruling in the plenitude of power, and as we read we feel that he is speaking of Him unto whom all power in heaven and earth is given, and who has received the Gentiles for His inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession. But soon the kingdom is divided, and its glories fade away. Each reign sees a deeper dégradation settling upon the realm: the national faith is corrupted, general wickedness prevails, and the Assyrians appear as God's appointed instruments of punishment. In the hour of distress Isaiah is commissioned to warn and rebuke them; but he has also words of consolation: and these, intended for present use, are so overruled that future generations call him the Prophet of the Gospel. The hosts of Sennacherib perish, but the danger is not averted, for the same sins are still persisted in, and therefore the same effects follow; and another prophet

arises to admonish them, and words again are spoken accomplished only in the nativity at Nazareth. And again the fortunes of the people change, and centuries follow of a heroic but hopeless struggle, the commencement of which was inaugurated by the voice of several prophets. With the changed circumstances of the nation, much of the outward form of prophecy was different; for in every age prophecy reflected the current feelings and national fortunes of the times. None, for instance, of the later prophets speak of a king executing righteousness and judgment; the royal house sank into obscurity during the exile, nor could the merits of Zerubbabel, though affectionately recorded by his countrymen, win back the throne for the lineage of David: and therefore the prophets of the restoration draw their images, not from the kingly majesty which had ceased to exist, but from the priesthood, round which all that was noble in the nation had gathered. And yet, notwithstanding so great a change, no note is struck which jars with the declarations of previous prophets, nor is there a word which does not fitly belong to Him who is our Prophet, Priest, and King.

To many it has seemed as if this character of prophecy were a weakness and defect; just as in the New Testament they complain that no exact statement of doctrines is given, but only pregnant words dropped here and there, and great principles enunciated, not with the pomp of eloquence, but simply, and as it were by chance, and as occasion called them forth. They wonder, therefore, that in prophecy no

Sibylline books were given to the Jews, claiming from the first to be the declarers of future events; that no exact and definite narrative was written of Messiah's birth and life, and death and resurrection, but only words casually let fall, which combine, indeed, into a marvellously complete representation of His coming and attributes, but of which many are capable of some lower application. But so it is ever in this world. The gifts of God are scattered bountifully, but so that man has always to gather them and adapt them to his use. God's gifts and man's labour are, for us, inseparable. For the idle and negligent, for the unwilling and perverse, His goodness is hidden away. As the indolent may starve though God clothe the fields with His bounty, so may the infidel perish for lack of knowledge though Scripture contain everything necessary for his mental use. Of the manner of God's gifts, however, we are not judges. His thoughts are not as our thoughts; and probably nothing so clearly shews this as the lurking fancy of men that they could improve upon God's work. As regards His moral dealings with us, and the manner in which good and evil are ever found in near proximity and strange union in this world, it is in them no uncommon thought, that had the power been confided unto them they would not have made our state so full of difficulties. And similarly in Holy Scripture, when in so many particulars it is different from what we might have expected, instead of remembering that our business is to take the facts of our case as they are, and labour to bring our lives into conformity with God's laws, they

either brood over their difficulties and give way to discontent, or parade them as proofs that God has not dealt wisely and kindly by the works of His hands.

Viewed, however, in a truer light, this want of method in the prophecies, combined with their real unity, proves that in this, as in all His works, God has done all things well. For, in reading the prophecies, if anything could bring conviction to the mind it would be the entire agreement and convergence to a single point of so many various declarations, made through so long a succession of ages by so many different writers, and under such perpetually varying circumstances of time and place. For, unmethodical as they are, and spoken not for the conscious purpose of revealing future things, but for the present guidance of God's people in the various emergencies which befell them, they possess in themselves a unity of the highest kind. All tend in the same direction, only as they advance they grow more clear, more distinct, more definite; constantly adding to that which went before, but never contradicting it; filling up the outline, but never going beyond it; commencing with the general promise of a deliverer, who should be emphatically the woman's seed, but gradually, as time went on, revealing His nature and His office, the family of which He should spring, the town where He should be born, the time of His advent, the manner of His teaching, the nature of His doctrines, His rejection by the Jews, His passion, His death, His burial, His resurrection, His glory, and the founding of His Church. And what, in

answer to this full sum of prophecy, is the fact, partially true, that several of these prophecies had also a passing reference to some other event? That David had also the thought of his own troubles, Solomon of his own glory? The prophets themselves, probably, did not understand the full purport of their words. They knew of the promise made to their nation, and the coming of the Messiah was a certainty deeply impressed upon their minds;—for it would be absurd to doubt that in the schools of the prophets they were trained from their youth to the constant study of their holy books, and that each additional declaration of their seers was the subject of deep and earnest meditation. No less St. Peter tells us, where he says, that they did enquire and search diligently into the meaning of that which the Holy Spirit which was in them did signify, especially with reference to the time when Christ should suffer, and the glory that should follow. But though the mission of their nation, and the promises made to it, were ever present in their memories, still it is probable that as each prophet was summoned to his office upon the pressure ever of some present emergency, he was not conscious at the time of the extent to which his words might have a higher application. He felt himself, indeed, borne along by an irresistible influence, and was conscious that what he spake came from God; and subsequently, as he recalled his words to mind, he must have known that much that he had spoken referred really to the Messiah's advent; but probably he would altogether have been unable to distinguish

between what was temporary and what eternal, or to tell what mysteries of redemption lay concealed under the veil of allusions to contemporaneous events.

It was with them as with others who were types of Christ. When Isaac went unresisting to the sacrifice, he did not himself know the mystery which he was shadowing forth. When the ministering priests led the victim to the altar, but few probably saw in the rites of their temple service the indications of better things. But when we find the close agreement of type and prophecy with the Gospel dispensation, when we read the undoubting appeals of our Lord and His Apostles to the prophetic books, and to Moses in the law as testifying of Him, and perceive how full the Old Testament is of passages and things which naturally and of themselves suggest Christ to us, we may well be content to rest our faith upon so broad a foundation, even though it be possible for controversial minds to suggest specious objections against special prophecies in detail. For though the force of individual passages may be weakened, still the great fact remains unaccounted for, that throughout there is a general assent and subservience of the Old Testament to the doctrines of the New.

For surely, if the hand of God had not been there, so wonderful an agreement could not have been attained to! Among so many authors, with such various purposes before them, and under such vast differences of outward circumstance and mental development, there must have occurred, but for the Spirit's presence, irreconcilable contradictions. Some able man

would have arisen to stamp a new impress upon the national literature. The erratic hand of genius would have snapped the thread of ancient tradition, and founded new schools and modes of thought. Their views of the promised deliverer at one period would have been in direct antagonism with those at another. Statements would have been made so totally opposite that one side or other must have been false. Human passions would have stained the portraiture of Messiah's person, and selfish purposes have debased the representation of His kingdom. Even individual men are often at variance with themselves, and give utterance at different times to views strangely inconsistent with one another. But there is no such variance in the words of prophecy. Like all the works of God, it has its difficulties, to try our faith; but also, like all His works, in its broad outlines it declares its Almighty author, and proclaims His goodness and His glory.

Far different would be its character were it possible to bring forward passages of Holy Writ which took a different and irreconcilable view of the Messiah's office from that contained in the rest of Scripture; or if there were predictions referring to His first advent plainly unfulfilled; or worse than this, predictions contrary to what really happened. Did even any prophet describe Messiah's attributes in a different spirit from the rest, taking a different view of man's needs, and of God's purposes of mercy; if we had to balance between opposing prophecies, and to weigh counter-statements, and could not em-

brace them all in one harmonious whole, wherein each finds its natural and proper place; were aught of this the case, then no longer would the evidence of the Old Testament be what it now is, "the more sure word of prophecy," more sure even than the voice which St. Peter heard upon the Mount of Transfiguration, declaring Christ's eternal Sonship. The Jewish Scriptures might still have a value; they might still be, as many think they merely are, an interesting national literature, of much historical worth, as shewing what preceded Christianity; but they would no longer offer to our reasons a satisfactory proof of Christianity being a revelation from God, with claims therefore upon our obedience, and authority to declare to us the truths upon which our eternal state depends.

As it is, the Old Testament gradually prepares for and leads on unto the Christian dispensation; while without Christianity it becomes itself full of difficulties incapable of a satisfactory solution. For, unlike other religions, it does not claim to be final, but ever looks onwards to the coming of something more perfect. Its central truth is a promise, a hope, an expectation, of which it seeks the fulfilment, and in which it is ever disappointed. It is not till the first chapter of the Gospels that we read the words, "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet." Till then, whatever form the records of the Jewish people took, their laws, their histories, their lyric odes, their prophecies; whatever circumstances called their writers



forth, equally in the hour of triumph and in the darkness of calamity, it was still to the future that they turned, and all alike in every age were animated with the same firm conviction of the coming of a Saviour. Hope was ever their guiding star, whether it were the first mother bending over her new-born child, and calling him her Cain, the man whom she had gotten to be her lord; or the dying patriarch, who dwelt in vision upon Judah's glory, destined only then to cease when the Shiloh, the great scion of the race, whose the sceptre really was, should come; or their legislator, who bade them in his last discourse look for the appearance of another prophet like unto himself: ever, in all cases, it was a promise which was their comfort and their joy, even to the last utterance of prophecy, "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple." It was a religion of the future, having for the present types only and enigmas, veiled meanings and symbolic acts; but far away in the dim distance it had its heritage. This heritage Judaism itself never attained to; the bright pictures of national glory set forth by the prophets it has never seen fulfilled. Plainly it was but a preparatory religion, educating men for a more perfect state of things. In itself it could never accomplish its mission of blessing all the nations of the earth, for it had in it no completeness, no perfection; it did but point onwards, and wait for the coming of a better hope. And then would the veil be raised, and the secret lessons and hidden meanings of its rites and ceremonies be disclosed. The words of its

prophets would gain their true significance; their temple worship and solemn sacrifices would be seen in their real meaning as types of the Saviour of mankind; and what had been before but a local religion and a partial manifestation of God's will, would become the religion of the world, destined in God's time to gather unto it all nations and tongues, and to diffuse everywhere the pure light of Christian truth.

In every way Judaism carried in its very bosom the marks of its temporary character. For being purely local, it could only exist under certain political circumstances, which nothing but a special providence could maintain. Its enactments all suppose a limited territory, an agricultural population, great equality in social condition, and an absence of intercourse, whether commercial or otherwise, with alien nations: but such a community was sure, sooner or later, to fall under the dominion of the great empires in whose very pathway it was set, or to degenerate into an exhausted and motionless stagnation. There was, indeed, one element of life in it—one alone—which kept it from sinking into the fixity of type which otherwise must have been the inevitable lot of a people so situated; and that element was prophecy. But prophecy itself implies two evils,—one of the past, and one of the future: of the past, insufficiency; of the future, destruction. As regards the past, the existence of the prophet implies that the amount of truth hitherto given is insufficient; not incomplete merely,—for all truth given to man must be incomplete, since necessarily it must be limited by the powers of the re-

ipient,—but insufficient. For the office of the prophet is to develope and unfold that which the earlier revelation had not declared with sufficient clearness for man's necessities. Thus, for example, the faint indications in the law of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, were gradually developed into the more fixed and definite doctrines of the prophetic books. But such a change in doctrines of such vital importance could not but lead to a dangerous confusion of ideas. What had reference in the law of Moses to temporal sanctions would naturally be interpreted in accordance with the deeper knowledge of the time. Accordingly, we find that the declaration contained in the fourth commandment, that God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children,—an undeniable fact as regards the general course of His moral government of the world,—was applied by the people to the guilt of sin instead of its temporal consequences: and therefore Ezekiel was commissioned to reveal in God's name a truer and more exact account of the law whereby men will be judged. And as the existence of the prophet—a living authority, that is, who speaks in God's name—implied insufficiency in the past, so did it imply destruction in the future. For such an institution could belong only to a temporary and preparatory religion. When the measure of truth according to man's needs is full, when, in other words, revelation has reached that stage at which God has given whatever is necessary for man's salvation, then the living authority, with power to develope and to decree, must pass away.

For the business of a living infallible authority is not to remove difficulties, but to render the means of salvation sufficient. For the removal of difficulties would render impossible the great purpose, as far as we can understand it, of the present state of things, namely, man's probation. Without difficulties our faith could not be tried, and a faith untried, and which therefore had never overcome, would be no faith. Faith by its very nature presupposes difficulties; for the moral nature of faith—its virtue, so to speak—consists in the very fact that it is associated with an effort of the will, whereby we refuse to allow mere intellectual doubts to interfere with the spiritual wants of the soul. Had we perfect knowledge, we should escape from the necessity of choosing, as we now must choose, between belief and unbelief; but that we have to make this choice, and that in making it we have to face and overcome difficulties, need surprise no one. For it is but another form of a necessity the existence of which we all acknowledge, that, namely, of choosing between good and evil. And in most cases the choice resolves itself into the same one effort. Man chooses moral good by choosing religion. To choose a virtuous life, apart from the motives, and influences, and hopes of the Christian covenant, may be the act of a philosopher; but, happily, such persons are of rare occurrence, and to ordinary men it is the truest wisdom to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, in the certain conviction that He will enable His people to live to His glory, and to their own present peace and future happiness.

It follows, therefore, that the existence of a living infallible authority is possible only under a temporary state of things. As long as the sum of revealed truth is insufficient for the wants of the soul in its state of probation, so long the prophet is needed to explain and unfold from time to time truths as yet but partially declared. And with each increase of knowledge there was a corresponding progress in the minds of the better portion of God's people of old, and the need was felt of more truth and greater illumination; and so fresh stages were reached, and withal there was the more eager and vehement longing for His advent who is the Desire of all nations, and who, as we believe, has given to mankind sufficient knowledge and motives powerful enough to supply all their needs in this present world. His dispensation, therefore, will have no end until the final consummation of all things, nor is the truth which He has revealed capable of increase. It may be better explained and better understood; its wonderful adaptability to all times and states, and to the varying progress of the human intellect, may manifest itself more and more clearly; but we can expect no fresh truths, nor can any addition be made to that faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. There may be a difference in our way of using the gift, but the gift is in itself sufficient, and will remain unchanged.

These considerations may possibly also serve to enable us to understand the nature of what is termed

the double sense of prophecy. We have seen that the mission of the prophet was to unfold and explain the way of God's dealings with mankind, ever adding to the sum and clearness of that which went before, but generally doing so in an unmethodical manner, and seldom, like Ezekiel in the passage referred to above, directly revealing new truths, but content rather with practical exhortations and warnings fitted for the emergency which had summoned him to undertake his office. We have further seen that the Jewish dispensation was in its very nature temporary, and a preparation only for a better and final revelation. Now such a dispensation must more or less foreshew the nature of that state of things to which it was itself subservient. If the Jewish covenant was intended to prepare for and lead on unto the Christian, its traits and lineaments must in everything essential agree with that which was its own perfection. The people of God could not have been educated and fitted by Judaism for Christianity unless there existed a close relation and resemblance between the two. Whatever in the law was for a mere temporary purpose would of course perish with the using, but in its main outlines it prefigured the Gospel, and therefore would simply be developed and merged into the more perfect form of the latter,—just as the child, though he puts away all childish things, is really one with, and finds his perfection in, the man. And this is what we mean when we speak of the Jewish as being a type of the Christian Church,—that there is a certain parity and resemblance between the two, arising from their

being in their inner essence the one revelation of God's will to man in the several stages of its up-growth. In the Christian Church we have the perfection of that which previously was in a state of progress, starting with the prediction given to the woman and culminating in the teaching of Isaiah, but still incomplete and a promise only until Messiah came. Now whatever belonged to the Jewish Church merely in its state of growth, exists no longer; but whatever belonged to its real inner essence still remains, only perfected and completed in Christ. In the preparatory stage prophecy was a necessity: there was to be an advance in truth, and the authoritative revelation of this growing truth was prophecy. It might have existed in various ways; it did actually exist in more ways than one: for the typical act, such as those referred to by St. Paul, virtually was a prophecy; the symbolical ritual was a prophecy; but chiefly it existed in a race of men commissioned to speak from time to time in the name of Jehovah. Men may and do find fault with the manner in which prophecy actually existed: they would have arranged it differently. But so would they have created the world differently, and improved upon all God's works,—that is, had the power been confided to them still such as they are now, and they had remained in full possession of their ignorance, their narrow faculties, and limited judgment. For the mind of man cannot comprehend God, nor understand the reason of His acts: and this, perhaps, is the lesson taught us by the mystery when Moses would have seen God. It is but as

from a cleft in a rock that man can see his Maker, and even there God covers him with His hand, so that at most he sees but His hinder parts. Man cannot, therefore, view God's dealings from the front; he cannot understand the causes of His acts; to do so he must exist as a pure spirit; at most he can understand only facts, and with these alone he is competent to deal. Now God apparently so ordered it that the prophets existed chiefly for the use of the Jewish Church. Many of them did entirely so exist, for of twelve prophets mentioned in the Scriptures as living between the times of Solomon and those of Uzziah, not one has left any prophecy on record, although among them was Elijah, the very representative of the prophetic race. But while their mission seemed thus bounded by the necessities of the Jewish Church,—necessities occasioned by the insufficiency of the revelation hitherto given it,—there were other prophets who had also the further office of setting forth the chief facts and doctrines of the Messiah's kingdom. They probably did not themselves fully understand all they said. They knew, of course, when they appealed to the promise of a Messiah as the surest guarantee of Israel's safety, what was the primary import of their words, but they probably did not know with how full a meaning those words were fraught, and that they would combine into so exact a representation of the Saviour, that His Apostles in times to come would appeal to their writings as offering the most convincing proof that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Messiah, and the Christian Church



in all ages rely upon them as "the more sure word of prophecy."

But even these words had often a passing reference to some event in Jewish history: and naturally so, for, as we have just shewn, the Church of old pre-figured the Church now. There was a necessary and essential resemblance between them which made it not unsuitable that what primarily was spoken of the one should also travel onwards to the other. And besides, the mission of the prophet was, in the main, to his contemporaries; and it seems ever to be the law of the Spirit's operations, as much in His extraordinary inspiration of the prophets of old, and of the Evangelists and writers of the New Testament, as in His ordinary guidance of men now, to interfere as little as possible with the free agency of the individual. The law seems the same as that whereby God's providence directs His people. They cannot see His hand, but must judge and act for themselves, and yet when they look back, they can see how He has led them, and shaped their course as was best for the welfare of their souls. Similarly the prophets were guided by the Spirit's influence, and that influence often was powerful enough for them to know and feel that what they spoke was not their own, but His; just as the Apostles also often claim to speak as from the Lord. And yet the influence was not such as to interfere with their free-will; for had it done so, the prophets alone of men would not have had a probation, and therefore would have been capable neither of reward nor of punishment. We find, however, that

the interference with them was the very least possible. Like Jonah, they might try to escape from bearing the message, and repine because it brought them no honour. Like Balaam, they might endeavour to make God's gifts the means of advancing their worldly fortunes, and bring upon themselves condemnation. Like the man of God from Judah, they might disobey, and bring upon themselves death. And all are left in possession of their own natural gifts: they have each their own style, their own way of thinking, their own amount of knowledge and experience. The Holy Ghost did not teach them scientific truths, as many absurdly think He ought. Had He done so, they should equally have been instructed in all the various branches of knowledge in which human progress chiefly consists, only not as these truths are at present known imperfectly, but as they will be known thousands of years hence, should the world last so long: with the unfortunate result that the Bible therefore would have been unintelligible as long as knowledge was imperfect and in progress only, and consequently to all men at all times. But the law of creation, which made man a free agent, and subjected him to a probation, required that even inspiration should not overpower his will, nor interfere with the conditions of his being; for it is an impossibility for one law of God to contradict another, or for one part of His dealings to be at variance with the rest.

The prophets then spoke and acted in accordance with their own individual characters and knowledge, and that of the times in which they lived. Their

words, also, were addressed to their contemporaries, and were generally occasioned by some present event. But with all this the wonder is, that so frequently it is impossible to explain their words of any occurrence in Jewish history. They often start with an allusion to something at the time, but seem entirely to forget it, and leave it behind as they proceed. Even in the seventh chapter of Isaiah, where everything seems to require that the prophecy should in its primary application be confined to some contemporaneous fact, it is marvellous how impossible it is to do so, and how inextricable is the mesh of difficulties in which men involve themselves in the attempt to find any other satisfactory interpretation than that which refers it to the Messiah. So, also, when one reads the efforts of modern commentators to discover some person to whom they can apply the ninth and fifty-third chapters of the same prophet; when one observes the constant changing and shifting of the argument, how one person must do service here, and another there, in the parts of the same prophecy; with what ingenuity little points are made to bear a heavy strain, while facts of moment are dismissed with contemptuous silence; with what confidence the most dubious facts of profane history, and the most groundless traditions, are treated as certain verities, while the narrative of the Bible is dismissed as inaccurate,—as these things are forced upon one's attention, one gradually arrives at the conclusion, not merely that the Word of God has nothing to fear from such an ordeal, but that this double sense of prophecy is something much less than

people generally imagine. It is scarcely more than this, that the occasion of the prophecy was given by some contemporaneous event, which event was speedily forgotten, and had no farther influence upon the prophet's words.

Very many of the prophecies do not belong to the Messiah, but have reference solely to the temporal fortunes of the Jewish people, and the nations round; and their use now is confined to illustrating the great laws of morality and providence, while they also prove the reality of prophecy by the agreement of the predictions with recorded facts. Of these, however, I am not now speaking, but of such as belong to Christ and His Church. Now some of these have a twofold application, for they belong first of all to the Jewish Church, but in fuller measure to the Christian. And if among them some apparently apply to the Jewish nation, we must remember that to the minds of the prophets the nation was identical with the Church. It ought to have been so: the very idea of the theocracy was the complete identification of Church and State, and the prophets often regard the nation in its ideal rather than in its real character. But there are also prophecies which refer simply to our Lord, and which no straightforward criticism can interpret otherwise; or, at all events, the balance of evidence is so entirely in favour of their Messianic interpretation, that any other interpretation can only serve to entangle the expositor in a labyrinth of difficulties. There are many difficulties for all in the exposition of the Old Testament, many hard questions which

may serve to exercise our patience and try our faith ; but the hardest of all tasks, I believe, would be to read it, and not find there a sufficient preparation for and proof of the Gospel dispensation.

Now these considerations upon the general nature of the proof to be deduced from prophecy in favour of Christianity must be borne in mind in the examination of each particular prophecy ; for it is not upon the particular prophecy that the Christian argument is staked, but upon the agreement and convergency of all prophecy, and the manner in which its isolated statements all find their completion in Christ. No doubt many of the prophecies had a slight and passing reference to some contemporaneous event, but even that was possible only because the Jewish Church was itself a type of the Christian. The law, we read, was “a schoolmaster to bring men unto Christ;” it was an education of the Jew first and then of the Gentile, to fit them for receiving the Gospel ; and naturally, therefore, local and temporary occurrences were made by the providence of God the means of instructing men in eternal truths ; and prophecies, which took their origin in events immediately about to happen, hurried irresistibly onward till they reached the glories of Messiah’s reign. So was it with our Lord. An apparently casual remark in praise of the buildings of the temple led Him to foretell their ruin ; but as He spake of the Roman armies encircling Jerusalem, His words soon gathered a deeper meaning, and passed onwards to the dread visitations at all times of God’s

justice, and chiefly to its last and greatest manifestation at the final day of account. And so was it with Isaiah's prophecy of the Immanuel. From the preservation of Ahaz, the unworthy occupant of David's throne, and the overthrow of Judah's enemies, in a time so short that a child then to be born would be as yet too young to distinguish between good and evil, the Spirit's influence so controlled his words that they passed on to the Virgin's Child, the Immanuel who is God and Man; and finally, leaving far behind him all thought of the impending danger, he told of the light that should shine in Zebulon and Naphthali, which were no parts of Ahaz's kingdom, and of "the Son, on whose shoulder is the government, and whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

If it is necessary to bear in mind the nature of prophecy itself, equally so is it to understand rightly the prophet's office. As we have already seen, he was the living infallible authority, rendered necessary in the Jewish dispensation by the insufficiency of the light already given, and therefore his business lay rather with the present than with the future, and was not so much to foretell as to teach. He was not a diviner, whose profession it was to search out future events, but one commissioned to speak authoritatively in another's name. He was the *προφήτης*, the spokesman of another, another's mouthpiece; just as Aaron was the prophet of Moses<sup>a</sup>; and in his highest dig-

<sup>a</sup> Exod. vii. 1.

nity he was one who spoke for God, God's spokesman. It is simply a mistake to regard prediction as synonymous with prophecy, or even as the chief portion of the prophet's duties. Whether the language be Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, the ancient words for prophecy all refer to a state of mind, an emotion, an influence, and not to prescience. The prophet is one who is taken out of himself and carried away by an influence from another, although not deprived of the power of resisting this influence<sup>b</sup>. His free agency did not cease; prophets could and did refuse obedience; but when once they had surrendered themselves to the Spirit, their words ceased to be their own<sup>c</sup>, nor did they necessarily understand their purport. In Hebrew the verb "to prophesy" is never used in any active conjugation: of the numerous modes used by that language to express the conditions of the verb, it applies two only to the word in question, the simple passive, in the sense of "to prophesy," and the reflective passive, in the sense of "to act the prophet," "to behave like a prophet<sup>d</sup>;" and by the use of these passive conjugations solely, it shews that the prophet was controlled by another; that he spake not his own words, but was the bearer of a message, the authority of which depended not upon the speaker, but upon him in whose name he spake. Similarly in Greek the prophet's proper designation is *μάντις*, a word connected with *μαίνομαι*, and descriptive of the vehemence of the impulse which urged him to give his

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 32.<sup>c</sup> Numb. xxii. 38.<sup>d</sup> 1 Sam. xviii. 10.

utterance. So in Latin, it is a passive verb, *vaticinor*, of which Cicero says *vaticinari et insanire*, to prophesy is the same thing as to be beside oneself: and by this very term *insanivit*, the Chaldee paraphrast explains the passage in 1 Sam. xviii. 10, "An evil spirit came upon Saul, and he prophesied," or rather, "behaved like a prophet in the house." It means, he says, "he was mad," אִשְׁרָי, and his acts resembled those of men who had surrendered themselves to the prophetic impulse.

Yet probably it was but seldom that this fervour came upon the true prophet. It was possibly more frequently paraded by pretenders to prophecy, than really felt by the true seer. The contemptuous language of the common people, which confounded prophecy and madness, though less contemptuous than with us, for madness is viewed with a sort of respect in the East, yet leads us to suspect that there were many, half deceivers half self-deceived, who, like the dervishes now, indulged in violent gesticulations and grotesque bodily contortions, until they had worked themselves into a temporary frenzy, during which they gave utterance to unconnected words, which the superstition of the people regarded as prophetic, and which from their very vagueness were easily capable of being dragged into agreement with future events. In the true prophet there seems to have been little of this. We find Balaam indeed falling into a trance, but his eyes were open. The captains said unto Jehu, "What did this mad fellow say unto thee?" but it was probably the abruptness of his entry, his curt



sharp words, his sudden flight, which startled them. We find the prophets often performing symbolical acts, which to our cold Northern manners seem strange, but in their general bearing there is usually great calmness and dignity. When Nathan rebukes David, when Elijah gathers the people to Carmel, when Isaiah foretells the destruction of the Assyrian host, when Jeremiah writes his warnings in a roll for the self-willed king, all is majesty, and the noble repose of minds supported by the divine strength. Doubtless there was often fervour; their hearts burnt within them at the terrific import of words which they knew came from God; often in their visions, like St. Paul, they could not have told whether they were in the body or out of the body, whether they saw with their natural eyes, or the mind alone, endued with new powers, held converse with the things of a higher world: but we find no instances of the prophet losing his free agency, and degraded beneath the dignity of man, becoming the mere instrument of a compulsion from without. They claim in their writings a divine authority, but we find nothing of the fury of the Pythoness and the rage of the Sibyl. These are the marks of the false prophet; the notes of God's works are majesty and repose.

The main office of the prophet was to be a teacher of morality and religion. The motives and sanctions of the Jewish law were not sufficient to bend the hearts of men to a holy life, and therefore the schools of the prophets were instituted, not by any enactment of the law, but by some prophet probably, or course

of prophets, for the training of those who felt themselves called to be preachers of righteousness. Among them from time to time rose men with higher powers, and on whom the Spirit of God rested in an extraordinary manner : but often centuries passed by without any one of them claiming to be inspired of Jehovah, or being reputed by the people as such. And then came times when there were many prophets, as in David's reign, and such as was that wonderful series of men who for so long a time struggled with the growing idolatry of the kingdom of the ten tribes, and gave them a final opportunity of repentance. There were also then numerous pretenders to prophecy, but it seems to have been no difficult matter to distinguish them from the true ; for when four hundred prophets predicted victory to Ahab and Jehoshaphat, the latter plainly put no faith in their words, but enquired whether there were not one prophet of Jehovah besides. Even the idolatrous Ahab acknowledged in Micaiah, the son of Imlah, something higher than in his own loud-tongued seers ; and though the prediction of his death did not prevent him from entering the battle, yet he sought to escape what he probably felt was inevitable by a disguise. But it was only during the rapid decline of Judah that written prophecy became frequent. The prophets seem from the first to have kept records of the lives of the kings, and the habits of authorship thus acquired were used by the overruling providence of God to prepare the people for the substitution of Christ's spiritual reign in the place of that temporal kingdom which was fast fading away.

And when the full outline of Messiah's advent had been given, and the people restored to their land after the Babylonian exile, prophecy became silent. Enough for the present wants of the people had been bestowed, and the provision for reading the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms in their synagogues on the Sabbath-day kept ever before their eyes the moral lessons of their former seers. Their idolatrous tendencies had ceased: their faith in God had become firm and unwavering. So far the teaching of the prophets had accomplished its purpose. But with their moral teaching had ever been combined another element; where the teaching had been only moral it had passed away. Nathan and Gad, Ahijah and Shemaiah, Elijah and Elisha, appear only in the records of Jewish history; but there were others who had the further office of declaring the great truths of the Christian covenant, and their works remain. They may have thought chiefly of the earthly Jerusalem, but their words belonged to the Christian Church. They may have thought chiefly of present needs, but God was using them for His eternal purposes; and when we read the Prophets of old, we feel that it is not an extinct national literature that we are studying, we are not among things that belong merely to the past; God by them still speaks to us; they are the lively, the still living oracles, the *λόγια ζῶντα*, of truth. They still possess an authority over us, still claim our obedience; they still tell us of our dangers, and of our safety; of our sins, and of the atonement wrought

for them ; of our alienation from God, and of Him who is the Immanuel, the God-man, God of God, and yet very man, that He might be the Mediator, who could reconcile us to God, and heal the breach which sin had made between the Creator and the creature.

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## ERRATUM.

Page 179, *line 1*, for Huriel, read Husiel.

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## SERMON I.<sup>a</sup>

ISAIAH vii. 14.

*“ Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”*

OF the prophecies of Isaiah none has excited greater attention, or more frequently been the chosen battle-field of hostile criticism, than that contained in the seventh, eighth, and first seven verses of the ninth chapters. And naturally so; for it contains in itself all the most remarkable features of Jewish prophecy,—its strength, and also what many consider to be its weakness. It was spoken upon the occasion of an urgent impending danger; in its general aspect and primary bearings it seems to refer to present events: and nevertheless, its Messianic character is affirmed by the Apostles, and ever prominently put forward by the Christian Church. Even those who deny that it refers to Christ, nevertheless assert that it has moulded Christian doctrine; and that when we profess our belief in the great article of the Apostles' Creed, that the Saviour was born of the Virgin Mary, we are affirming a tenet which owes its existence to a mistaken application of the words of the text<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Preached upon the occasion of the annual sermon upon the Jewish Interpretation of Prophecy.

<sup>b</sup> Gesenius; *Einleitung zum Com. über Jes.*, p. 40.

It is evident, therefore, that no slight matter is at stake; for if the virgin's child is a son of Ahaz, or a son of Isaiah,—if the child who is given unto us is Hezekiah, or Mahershalal,—what the Church loses is not merely the confirmation of prophecy to the Messiah's advent, but the doctrines connected with His being the Virgin-born. But these are no less than His immaculate conception, and the sinlessness of His human nature. And as the absolute purity of the human nature was essential to its union with the divine, our Lord ceases to be the one Mediator between God and man, and becomes man only; a great, and wise, but merely human prophet. He is an Immanuel, not as being Himself God and man, inseparably united in one person, but only as being one by whom God has helped man; an Immanuel only in an inferior sense, as a sign of God's providential presence with His people. It is the same in the interpretation of the fifty-third chapter. If Jeremiah is the object there of the affectionate threnody of his follower Baruch, it is not simply the testimony of prophecy that we lose, but the doctrine of the Atonement. In no part of the New Testament is the nature of the propitiation made for sin by the sacrifice on the cross more clearly stated than in Isaiah's words; and if it be proved that that chapter does not refer to our Lord, and that the Apostles were mistaken in applying it to Him, the belief of all Christian men from the earliest ages to the present day in the efficacy of our Saviour's death ceases to have a foundation. The Christian Scriptures are convicted of error in



their most vital point; and both the Jewish and Christian Church cease to be the bearers of a message from God to man. Revelation is but a mistake, and believers in it are the victims of a baseless superstition.

With so much at issue, it is essential that these questions should be fully examined. No man can afford to stake his faith upon doctrines which will not admit of the fullest enquiry. And when on every side we hear the confident assertions of those who consider that modern criticism has proved the weakness of the foundations upon which men have built their faith for eighteen centuries, it becomes necessary to examine these questions anew for ourselves; were it only because repeated assertion is sure to influence our belief to a certain extent until we carefully examine what proof it has to offer. But such an enquiry should be made on both sides with care and scrupulousness. To tamper with men's belief is a serious thing; and between the unbinding of the old fastenings and the tying of the new, the faith of a whole generation may be rudely shaken, if the disputants are more eager to unloose than to bind, to destroy than to build up. Whatever are men's true and final convictions let them honestly express, but with care, and only after an earnest and conscientious examination into the reasons of their belief, lest they be found, not the planters of truth, but the subverters of other men's faith.

For here, perhaps, there is an error in our current views against which we ought to guard. In our disputes with Rome, owing to the necessity of protect-

ing our position, our theologians have been apt to speak chiefly of the "right" of private judgment; and those who have taken less controversial ground have described it as a "duty." Truly it is neither one nor the other, but a necessity: men must choose. Raise a man by education to but the slightest degree of thought, and he begins to judge,—ignorantly often and foolishly, but necessarily. It is a part of his heritage of free-will. But the choice is like that which every man must make between good and evil: to choose is the most momentous duty of life, and its consequences, we believe, affect the soul permanently. Just, then, as many men choose moral evil, so will many men choose mental evil. They have no right to do so; it is not a duty to do so; they must answer before God, and in a measure before man, for what they choose to believe, as well as for what they choose to do. But it is certain that many will choose wrongly; and, in fact, it is no more wonderful that men arrive at different conclusions than that they arrive at different standards of morality: but when any one endeavours to persuade others to adopt his views, he is incurring a further responsibility; and nothing but repeated examination, and the firmest conviction of the truth of his conclusions, can justify any one in subverting the bulwarks of that Christianity, which if it be not true, then has God given no revealed truth to man.

Let, then, the prophecies of Isaiah be carefully examined: they are of too great importance, too closely connected with Christianity, for us to be able to con-

tent ourselves with indefinite opinions concerning them. They are too much part and parcel of Christianity for us to hold the one and give up the other, or be indifferent about their right interpretation. And to fear the result of the most stringent examination is to acknowledge that the foundations of our faith are already sapped; whereas if holy men of old did really speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we may feel quite sure that the more searching the enquiry into their words, the more satisfactory will be the result.

The prophecy, then, from which my text is taken was spoken upon the occasion of the threatened attack upon Jerusalem by the combined forces of Rezin King of Syria, and Pekah King of Israel. Spoken then, but committed to writing long afterwards: for it is plain that on more than one occasion the prophecies of Isaiah were delivered extemporaneously, and subsequently written<sup>c</sup>. The advance of the two kings upon the capital naturally excited great terror there; for already Pekah, unaided by any ally, had defeated Ahaz, and slain of Judah 120,000 valiant men, and carried 200,000 women and children into captivity. And when, following up his successes, he laid siege to Jerusalem, and after a temporary failure formed a powerful confederacy for her utter ruin, "the heart of the house of David was moved, and the heart of his people as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." In this emergency, Isaiah, though still

<sup>c</sup> Cf. Gesenius, *Einleitung*, p. 35.

but a very young man, was commissioned to encourage Ahaz by a series of prophecies, in which, as they were subsequently committed to writing, we find three most important statements concerning our Lord: the first, that He was to be the Virgin-born, and His name Immanuel; the second, that Zebulon and Naphthali should be the chief seat of His earthly sojourn; and lastly, that He claims, as His attributes, to be Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

Common sense requires that a series of connected prophecies should be taken together; for whatever is their true explanation, it must be equally applicable to all parts alike. But we believe that none but the Christian interpretation does adequately represent their combined meaning; while to the Jews of the middle ages, who were the first objectors to their Messianic application, they thus occasioned no little difficulty. For they had no one to whom they could refer the Immanuel but Isaiah's son; and at the same time they felt the impossibility of his being the Child on whose shoulder is the government, and who is the Prince of Peace, and therefore they applied the latter part of the prophecy to the youthful Hezekiah. But obscured as is the unity of this series of prophecies by the division of our version into chapters and verses, nowhere more unhappy than in the book of Isaiah, it is generally acknowledged by modern commentators; and we may therefore regard it as a conceded fact, that these predictions, spoken in rapid succession upon the approach of Pekah's host, were subsequently

moulded by Isaiah's pen into one consistent whole; and consequently, the true interpretation must embrace every portion of the prophecy.

In the opening prediction the main strength of the Jewish attack is directed against the word rendered in our version 'virgin:' "Behold, a virgin shall conceive." They cannot deny that its most natural meaning is 'virgin,' or that it is so rendered—*παρθένος*—by the Seventy interpreters, in whose work we have the unbiassed views of the Jews upon their Scriptures, committed to writing while their language was still a living tongue, and before their opposition to Christianity had made them anxious to weaken the testimony of their prophetic books. It is a translation, moreover, made at a time prior by several centuries to the division of the Hebrew text into its component words, and by twice as many centuries anterior to the invention of that artificial system of vowels by which the Masorites have tied down the meaning of the Old Testament to the traditions of the Jewish schools of Tiberias and Sora. The authority, therefore, of the Septuagint is not to be lightly disregarded. But on the other hand, as early as the time of Justin Martyr the Jews rejected this interpretation, and Trypho argues that it need mean nothing more than *νεάνις*, 'a young woman,' and affirms that Hezekiah was the child meant; Hezekiah being at that time, according to the chronology of the Scriptures, ten years old. From this ground, then, the obvious facts of chronology at once drove the Jews, and their famous commentator David Kimchi says, "The young woman may be the

wife of Ahaz, or she may be the wife of Isaiah; but the Immanuel cannot be Hezekiah."

In the treatises, however, written by the Jews with the express purpose of impugning Christianity, the subject is entered upon at greater length, and especially in those to which they give the vaunting title of *Nizzachon*, or Victory, regarding them as unanswerable confutations of the truth of Christianity. But as the Jewish argument is nowhere so ably given as in Rabbi Isak ben Abraham's "Pillar of the Truth," a work justly considered as their most masterly apology for their refusal to accept the Christian faith, and widely diffused among them by continual reprints, I cannot do better than confine myself to his statements. After an examination then of the word *Almah*, Rabbi Isak concludes that it does not necessarily signify a virgin, but may mean any young woman. And then he asks, What sign would the birth of Jesus be to Ahaz, terrified by the present league between Samaria and Damascus? What encouragement would it give him to know that five hundred years afterwards a child would be born contrary to the usual course of nature? He wanted some present assurance; and this God gave him. For, 1st, in the mention of the threescore and five years, within which Ephraim should be broken, Isaiah recalled to the king's mind the well-known predictions of Amos i. 5, vii. 17, the fulfilment of which would fall in the third year of Ahaz' reign: and, 2nd, he gave him a present sign; for the prophetess, Isaiah's wife, should immediately conceive a male child, who would bear three names, — for

the Jews Immanuel, conveying thereby a pledge of God's constant presence among them; for Samaria Mahershalal, and for the king of Syria Hashbaz, implying, in both cases, the speedy overthrow of those two powers. As proof of this identification of Isaiah's son with the Immanuel, he adduces the parallel verses, "Before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings," as following immediately in chap. vii. upon the mention of the Immanuel; and "Before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria," similarly following in chap. viii. upon the mention of Mahershalal: thus limiting the whole scope of the prophecy to the narrow bounds of Israel's political fortunes, and giving no higher import to the name Immanuel than to that of Shear-Jashub, Isaiah's other son.

But as already the great Jewish commentator David Kimchi had rejected this interpretation, and shewn that this was too narrow a sense for the terms of the prophecy,—for how, he asks, would Isaiah venture to say of his own son, "and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel,"—Isak endeavours to shew that this passage need mean no more than that Judæa was the native country of Immanuel. He thinks, moreover, that Isaiah possibly might not have known at first who was signified by the *Almah*, the destined mother of the child; and thus accounts for the variation of phrase in the eighth

chapter, "I went unto the prophetess." Still dubious also whether the diversity of names may not imply a diversity of persons, he suggests that his mother may have called him Immanuel, and his father Maher-shalal. Further, pressed by the difficulty that there was nothing wonderful, no sign, in Isaiah having a second son, he answers, that every birth is a miracle, and that this birth was to be connected with the deliverance of Jerusalem from the confederate kings; and moreover, the child was not to be nourished upon the ordinary food of infants, but was to eat butter and honey, whence his early *εὐφροσύνη*, his precocity in rejecting evil even in his cradle, and choosing the good. That this even would be the natural consequence of such unusual diet he infers from the words of Isaiah <sup>d</sup>, "Whom shall God teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts." As to the Christian assertion, that the name Immanuel refers to the union of the divine and human natures in one person, he says, that it is the idiom of the Hebrew language to form its proper names by the use of some title of the Godhead, either prefixed, as in Yeho-shafat, 'God is judge;' or added on, as in Isaiah, that is, Yesa-yah, 'God shall save;' Jeremiah, that is, Yirm-yah, 'God shall cast down:;' or with the other name of deity, El, as in Samuel, Zuriel, Ezechiel, and the like. So even Jerusalem is styled in Jeremiah <sup>e</sup> "Jehovah our righteousness." Finally, he ob-

<sup>d</sup> Isa. xxviii. 9.

<sup>e</sup> Jer. xxxiii. 16.



jects, that the son of Mary never was called Immanuel, but Yeshua, Jesus.

But when he arrives at the end of the prophecy, Rabbi Isak changes his ground; for he argues that the son there is Hezekiah, as is proved, he thinks, by the use of the past tense,—“a son is born,” “a child is given;” and Hezekiah was then nine or ten years old. Nor, he thinks, are those magnificent words,—words so differently translated by the scholars of the present day,—in which Isaiah contrasts the noise and tumult and blood-stained garments of the battles of earthly warriors with the battles of the Lord, too grand for the description of the silent visit of the fiery angel to the camp of the Assyrians, whereby in the stillness of one night a mighty host was gathered to the dead. But even here a difficulty meets him, for the sixth verse of the ninth chapter cannot possibly apply to Hezekiah; the Prophet would not venture to call a boy ten years old “the mighty God, the Father of eternity:” and therefore Rabbi Isak accuses Jerome of corrupting the text; as if the very value of Jerome’s version did not consist in his adhering so faithfully to the traditions of his Jewish teachers. Apparently, however, he considers the Masoretic points to be as old as Jerome, and proposes to alter them so far as to allow of the verse being translated thus,—“He who is Wonderful, and the Counsellor, even the Mighty God, who is the Everlasting Father, shall call Hezekiah’s name the Prince of Peace.” But even so the difficulty is not escaped; for the next verse equally refuses to be tied down to Hezekiah. For

how could Isaiah truly say of him, "Of the increase of his government and peace"—words both occurring in the previous verse—"there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." For the chequered reign of Hezekiah these words are far too large; and therefore Isak sees in it a promise of the restoration of the temporal kingdom to the descendants of David as soon as the present calamities of the Jews shall have passed away; and Messiah, a temporal king, having defeated their enemies, shall restore them to their country, and found there an earthly realm, upon the throne of which, after his death—for Messiah is to die—kings of his race—for he shall see a literal seed—shall reign gloriously, but after the manner of earthly kingdoms, for ever.

Now, if this interpretation seem to many upon hearing it to have its weak points, and to be capable of easy refutation, it arises solely from two things: the first, that Rabbi Isak was a believer in prophecy; the second, that he did endeavour to make his interpretation embrace all the parts of the prediction. In other respects his argument suggests all the main features upon which modern critics rely. They, too, say that the Almah was Isaiah's wife, a second wife probably whom he was just about to marry, or some young woman standing by; but when they are asked how the Prophet could say of her child, that "the spreading of the wings of Assyria shall cover the

fulness of the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel," they answer, that it is mere poetry: such passages must not be strictly construed: the word Immanuel led the Prophet to the general thought of God's providence protecting the land; and we need not conclude that he was thinking of any particular person whatsoever<sup>f</sup>. Equally, in the ninth chapter, they say that the child there described is Hezekiah; but when the difficulty is stated, that the titles in the sixth verse, and the prediction of an unending reign of peace in the seventh, cannot apply to Hezekiah, they answer, that prognostication is an idea incorrectly attached to that of prophecy. Isaiah hoped that the reign of Hezekiah would be an era of splendour and general prosperity, but he was mistaken; and the titles, which are capable of a less forcible translation, amount only to the expression of a hope, that the youthful prince would prove to be a wise, brave, and peaceful sovereign. In a word, "that this ideal," says Gesenius<sup>g</sup>, "was not realized in Hezekiah is no proof that it was not intended for him: for the actual facts constantly fall short of the ideal expectations of the prophets."

Both schools, however, agree in the endeavour to tie down the meaning to the narrowest possible limit; but as the Jew grants the necessity of every prophecy being fulfilled, he is often reduced to the most puerile shifts by difficulties which the rationalist, who denies the supernatural element of prophecy, escapes. This the Jew indeed grants, but as he rejects the larger and spiritual, and Christian sense, every expression

<sup>f</sup> Cf. Meier, *Der Prop. Jes.*, p. 106.      <sup>g</sup> *Com. über Jes.*, p. 362.

of the Prophet must be fulfilled in its literal signification. The lion eating straw like the ox does not mean, according to Rabbi Isak's interpretation, that men of violent and cruel tempers shall be softened by the influence of those better hopes which the Messiah has brought with Him, but that the physical conformation of that animal shall undergo a reconstruction. The vision of the holy waters in Ezekiel xlvi. is not understood of the outpouring of grace upon the barren soil of the soul, but so literally, that the very course is mapped out which the two streams shall take. And in the vision of Zechariah, the cleaving of the Mount of Olives does not suggest the dividing of the Jewish people into those who accept and those who reject the new covenant, but is explained of physical convulsions, whereby an actual fissure is formed in the centre of that hill. And similarly, the rest of the imagery which the prophets use to suggest those things which the heart of man hath never been able to conceive, are, as a general rule, understood by the Jews in their simple and literal sense.

But puerile as are such interpretations, they are not more so than the assumption that the butter and honey literally signified the diet upon which the young child should feed; they are even less puerile than the use of the text quoted to prove the extraordinary result which might be expected to follow upon such nourishment. But the main weakness of the exposition consists in its constant shifting of ground. Now the young child is Isaiah's son; and then it is Heze-

kiah: to make it suit even him, there must be a violent alteration of the Masoretic text, the work not of Jerome, but of Jewish hands, made many centuries subsequent to Jerome's time, but embodying the traditions of scrupulously honest Jewish schools. And even so, his text will not suit his purpose, but while a part belongs to Hezekiah, the rest must be referred to a Messiah, of whose character he can form no higher conception than that he shall be a successful warrior, who shall found a kingdom, and entail it upon the heirs male of his dynasty for ever.

To enter upon the particular examination of the Jewish arguments one by one would suit rather the patient investigation of a commentary than the necessarily narrow limits of a public discourse. It may be enough to remark, that even were it the case that there is an allusion in Isaiah's words to some child then to be born, it by no means invalidates the Christian argument. For while the prophets supposed themselves to be speaking of things present, the fervour of inspiration often carried them onwards into future times: and just as in some landscape seen from a distant point the various parts approach one another and blend together, but as we travel onwards we find them separated by intervals more or less remote, so in the pictures on which the mental eye of the rapt seer gazed, events withdrawn from one another by periods more or less distant often group themselves together, and are all described by the Prophet in the same one Hebrew tense which expresses an act as just accomplished.

So, then, the prophecy with which we are now concerned rises from the local to the universal; from the temporary to the eternal; from the fortunes of the carnal Israel to the Christian Church; from the preservation of Jerusalem from the arms of Pekah to the deliverance of the world from sin and Satan.

That the prophecy was not finally fulfilled in contemporaneous events we may, I think, infer from the consideration that plainly it was committed to writing long after its temporary use had passed away. For the seventh, eighth, and first seven verses of the ninth chapters contain, as I have remarked before, a series of prophecies and prophetic acts, all referring to the same event; and of which, probably, some record was kept at the time: but the form in which they have come down to us is evidently the work of a later period, and probably belongs to that time when Isaiah was led by the Spirit of God to collect his scattered prophecies into one book. That Isaiah did himself so collect them, we may conclude from the probability of the case, from his habits as an author<sup>b</sup>, and from their early existence in writing, as is shewn by the use made of them by other prophets, as by Jeremiah, who in his forty-eighth chapter repeatedly alludes to the oracle against Moab contained in Isaiah xv., xvi.: and in addition, we have the express testimony of the title prefixed to the first chapter. It is, in fact, no improbable conjecture, that the Prophet occupied his later years in forming into one volume the records of the earlier outpourings of his spirit, and that he

<sup>b</sup> Cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 22, xxxii. 32.

not only then wrote that earnest warning and expostulation with the people by which they are now prefaced, but also that series of prophecies which commences with the fortieth chapter, and in which, unstirred by the political events which had previously agitated his mind, with his fervour softened by the weight of many years, but in the full clearness and calm repose of intellectual vigour, he pourtrays the Messiah's sufferings and death, and the founding of His universal Church.

In the present prophecy, were we even to lay but slight stress upon the historic form in which the whole narrative is cast, and of which the opening words are an instance,—“It came to pass in the days of Ahaz,” as if Ahaz were now no more,—no one can mistake the plain allusions in it to events which occurred after that king's death. For there can be no reasonable doubt that “the first light affliction of the land of Zebulon” refers to the campaign of Tiglath-Pileser, while “the more grievous affliction in Galilee of the Gentiles” is the desolating inroad of Shalmaneser, which happened in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign. Now as Ahaz reigned sixteen years, and the assault upon Jerusalem by Pekah took place soon after he mounted the throne, the record of the prophecy in its present form is at least twenty years subsequent to the circumstances which gave rise to it.

And from this, I think, we may fairly conclude that the purpose for which it was finally admitted into that written series of Isaiah's prophecies which was to form part of God's holy Word, was not so much the recording of a past event, as the leading on the minds of

the Jews to that which was the centre of their national hopes, — the promise, I mean, of a Deliverer who should be emphatically the woman's Seed. The same conclusion would equally follow from the prophecy of trouble and distress which occupies the eighth chapter, and which, to the best of our knowledge, was not historically fulfilled in the relations between Ahaz and the King of Assyria; and we can scarcely imagine Isaiah recording it at a period when those relations had entirely passed away, except for the sake of a more true, because a more spiritual interpretation, the description of the misery of the times when men are hard bestcad because they have no Saviour.

But leaving now these general considerations, we will proceed to shew that the Immanuel was the Messiah, and was so intended by the Prophet, from the direct consideration of the prophecy itself. For it was spoken at a time of danger, when a powerful confederacy was in arms to overthrow the house of David, and to put the son of Tabeal upon the Jewish throne; and Ahaz, still young and of an irresolute character, instead of trusting to the promises made by God to his house, followed a policy more dangerous than the confederacy itself. For rejecting the primary principles of the Theocratic government, which had the promise of special intervention in the time of danger, he turned to the King of Assyria for help. It is remarkable with how true a foresight the prophets always dissuaded from foreign intervention;



with what an enlightened judgment they bade the people look neither to Egypt, nor Babylon, nor Assyria, but remain apart from the leagues and confederacies of those troubled times; and when invasion and conquest befell, how wisely they counselled submission, until the appointed times of restoration came. And never was counsel wiser than the policy of Isaiah here; for so long as the border states of Samaria and Damascus existed, they separated the rugged hills of Judæa from the great military empires upon the Tigris and Euphrates: and while with these neighbouring states it could cope, its fall was certain when it had to contend with Nineveh and Babylon.

To resist the King's weak policy Isaiah was ordered to take with him his elder son, Shear-Jashub,—whose very name, 'a remnant shall return,' was a sign that Judah could never utterly perish,—and announce to Ahaz the certainty of the immediate overthrow of his enemies.

Now mark the place where Isaiah is commanded to meet him. It was at the conduit of the upper pool: on the north-eastern side, therefore, of Jerusalem, where alone the walls gave a besieging army the prospect of success; and Ahaz had probably gone there with his officers to inspect the walls, and take measures for protecting the supply of water, a matter of primary importance in the impending siege.

And again: it was at the end of the conduit, at the reservoir, at the causeway leading to the open space where the inhabitants of Jerusalem washed their clothes; or, as the Authorized Version renders it, "in

the highway of the fuller's field." It was therefore a busy place, and besides the King and his officers, the words of Isaiah would be heard by a crowd of common people.

The reason of his seeking this busy place plainly was, that King, and princes, and citizens might all hear his words, and be encouraged to look unto God for deliverance. They saw God's Prophet standing in the midst, assuring them that, imminent as seemed the danger, it should pass away almost within the year; and that, not by human policy, but by God's intervention, so that their duty was to have faith in Him and not look to the King of Assyria.

But the Prophet's words met with only a cold reception. More ready to listen to the suggestions of his fears than to the words of divine encouragement, the King turns away; and Isaiah is commanded by God again to address him, in a manner which would more decisively put his temper of mind to the proof. "Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. And Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." Now the King's refusal was plainly dictated by his unwillingness to change his course. Had he asked for a sign, and a sign been given him, he must have obeyed the Prophet's counsels. But his conclusions were foregone; he had sent his embassy to Tiglath-

Pileser with presents; and weak men are, of all, most afraid of changing their minds. Now to men like Ahaz God gives no sign in the ordinary sense; it is not the manner of God's dealings to force the unwilling to a hypocritical assent. The gift to man of free-will implies, as a necessary condition, that every man shall be left to the free exercise of it; and consequently that no one shall be placed under such circumstances that his faith and obedience become involuntary. "God's people must be willing in the day of His power." No miracle, therefore, could be wrought to convince Ahaz without violating the law of God's moral government. When God therefore gave him a sign, it was a veiled sign, which not till centuries afterwards would be clearly understood. For the present it merely suggested a limit, within which the impending danger would pass away: for the future it spake of the Godhead and the Manhood united in One, born of a pure virgin for the salvation of man.

Similarly our Lord both refused and gave a sign to the Jews. Refused it in the sense in which they presumptuously asked it, as a present miracle, which should force their assent; but gave them His own sign, His death and resurrection, yet even that ambiguously described as "the sign of the Prophet Jonah." And just as Isaiah's sign was the very hope of Israel, so our Lord's sign is that on which, in all ages, the faith of the Church has chiefly rested; for that death was the atonement by which sin is forgiven, and that resurrection the proof of the Saviour's

victory, and of the future resurrection of His saints. What Isaiah therefore appealed to was not a miracle to compel a reluctant submission : in the unbeliever his words would find no echo ; they would fall without force or meaning upon his ear. But besides the King there would be many standing there in whom faith was a living power, and in whose minds the Prophet's words would at once call up the thought of Him, for whose coming Israel had so long languished. They would remember that their nation did not exist without a cause, but had a mission to perform ; and that until that mission was accomplished, trial might come and chastisement, but never destruction : always " a remnant shall be left." They would remember that in them all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and that for this promise' sake Abraham had been summoned from his kindred, and his posterity formed into a separate people ; that for it David had been taken from the sheepfold, and set upon the throne, and the promise confined to one born of his family. And this promise all knew was that of the coming of a Deliverer, who should emphatically be the woman's seed, and bruise the serpent's head.

In the Hebrew the sign is not so indefinitely expressed as in the English version ; for it is not *a* virgin, but *the* virgin " shall conceive and bear a son ;" and though the Messiah was to be a descendant of Abraham, and of David's lineage, still it was the settled conviction of the Jewish mind that He was to be the woman's seed. It was this which filled the hearts of all Jewish maidens with hope ; it was this which made

Jephthah's daughter weep upon the mountains, and not the fear of the sacrificer's knife; it was to this that Jeremiah appealed when he said, "The Lord hath created a new thing on the earth, A woman shall compass a man." And similarly Micah connects the birth at Ephratah with the woman's seed: — "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel."

These are plain passages, of which few can doubt the application: but Jewish interpreters find the same meaning in expressions where we should look for it in vain, unless we were equally impressed as they were with the national view. Thus, for instance, in Jacob's blessing of the tribes, they render Shiloh — "until Shiloh come," — by "until the woman's offspring come," connecting the root with the word used in Deut. xxviii. 57, and there rendered "young one," but more literally in the margin, and probably used to signify the *τηλύγετος*, or 'dearest child,' towards whom nevertheless the mother's eye would be evil under the fearful pressure of long-continued famine.

And always, when dangers pressed them most, the house of Judah clung most closely to the promise of the Messiah; and to it, therefore, Isaiah now appealed. There may be, perhaps, in his words some

slight degree of ambiguity, some slight veiling of his meaning, for such was usually the case with the answers of the prophets as to their outer form, yet so as only to arouse the curiosity of the people to penetrate into their inner meaning: for to the Oriental imagination there is a singular pleasure in reading the dark saying and divining its interpretation. Here, however, the Prophet was alluding to a hope deeply fixed in the popular mind, and few probably would miss the intended inference, that until Messiah came, in vain would Samaria and Damascus be confederate together. For so long as that promise filled the breadth of Immanuel's land, though temporary troubles might visit them, yet their national existence was sure to remain unbroken.

The belief that the *Almah* might mean a married woman, the wife of Isaiah, the mother of Shear-Jashub, or a second wife, is a folly now abandoned by the most competent Hebrew scholars in Germany itself, in spite of the natural influence there of Gesenius, their great lexicographer and philologist. Nay, even at Tübingen, of whose critics Ewald has said that "the learned follies of Tübingen have justly aroused in all foreign countries a dislike of German knowledge,"—even there, their chief Hebraist acknowledges that not only does *Almah* never mean a married woman, however young, but signifies a virgin with reference to her purity and modesty; while *Bethulah* describes her in her civil relation, as still severed and removed from the duties of the family, and dwelling in seclusion, *ἐν τοῖς παρθενώσιον*.

It is then of a pure virgin that the Prophet speaks ; and, carried away by the fervour of inspiration, he sees Messiah's birth as already present,—“Behold, the virgin has conceived.” The very word twice occurs in a similar manner elsewhere in Scripture—of Hagar when she fled from Abraham's house<sup>i</sup>, and of Tamar<sup>k</sup>. The passage, therefore, cannot be applied to Mahershalal, as the tenses used in the historical parts of the eighth chapter shew, but must be interpreted according to that established grammatical rule which prevails throughout all the prophetic books, and by which the events not of the immediate but only of the distant future, are described as already past.

And what hopes would not be called up to the minds of the Jews by the prospect of the speedy coming of their national deliverer ! As the early Christians were supported under grievous trials by the expectation of the immediate return of Christ in glory, and as the Apostles themselves shared in this expectation, even while teaching patience, and reminding the faithful that “a thousand years with God are but as one day,” so was it with God's people of old. In all their troubles, the promise of the woman's Seed came nearer and nearer to them, and each day they seemed to catch signs of His approach. And probably in none was this expectation more fervent than in the prophets ; and while they knew that God had kept the times and the seasons in His own hand, they yet themselves not merely longed for the times of refreshing for their nation, but nourished the in-

<sup>i</sup> Gen. xvi. 11.

<sup>k</sup> Gen. xxxviii. 24.

tense hope that those times were near at hand. It was this hope which knit the Jews together at Babylon, and kept them a distinct people, while the ten tribes were lost among the nations into whose lands they were removed. And here also it gave them the strength of mind, in faith in God and with firm self-reliance, to meet and bide the storm of the confederate kings; while the hearts of the King and his counsellors were bowed as the trees of the wood bow before the wind, and could think of no rescue except by the arms of Assyria.

And seeing thus the Messiah's birth as already present, the Prophet uses it to express a definite length of time within which the league of the confederate kings would be broken; and the verification of this promise within the allotted period would be a sufficient sign to King and people that the counsel given by the Prophet came from God. In thus employing it for a temporary as well as for its final purpose, Isaiah was acting according to the established usages of prophecy, by which, down to the very times of the Apostles, and in the New Testament equally with the Old, events present or immediately future form the foreground, behind which lies the permanent but equally certain interpretation. And in this passage any one who has read the great writers of the primitive Church well knows the use which they have made of this prophecy; how, unencumbered with any thought of Ahaz, they enlarge upon the signs of Christ's victory over sin and death, which began while He still lay swaddled in



the manger of Bethlehem; how even to Him they give the name of Mahershalal, as the speedy spoiler of Satan's house, and see in the Magi the first-fruits of the riches of Damascus,—the first-fruits, that is, of the heathen world, "who were brought unto God by the teaching of the heaven, and whose school-master was a star."

The tense, therefore, which the Prophet uses here is the same as that which he afterwards employs in the magnificent words with which he closes the vision, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;" and as he could not but have known that no son of his could possibly be the Immanuel, the owner of the Holy Land, so equally must he have felt that those titles, "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father," belonged not to the pale glories of Hezekiah's chequered reign, but to the style of Him "to Whose light the Gentiles shall come, and kings to the brightness of His rising."

In the verse which remains to be examined before we can be said to have fairly met the difficulties of the passage, we have again another instance of the manner in which the Prophet interweaves the present with the remote future. We have seen that to his enraptured gaze the Virgin has already conceived; that the Child is already born, and the term of His undeveloped years fixed as the limit within which Damascus shall be broken. In a similar manner, but in more enigmatic language, Isaiah connects the punishment of Ahaz with the Immanuel's birth.

“Butter and honey shall be eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.” Now, taking only the general sense of the prophecy, without delaying at present to consider which of the two translations generally adopted in modern times is the true one,—“when He shall know,” or, “until He shall know to refuse the evil,”—I may say, that it signifies a period of desolation. By some confusion, probably, with the phrase, “a land flowing with milk and honey,” the Prophet’s words have been taken to imply the restoration of prosperity to Judah: they really signify exactly the reverse. And so in the remaining portion of the chapter, in which Isaiah foretels the punishment of Ahaz for seeking the aid of Assyria in violation of the principles of the Theocratic government, they are used as the symbol of extreme desolation. For, in the terms of the prophecy, the armies of Assyria are to waste the land till agriculture shall cease, and the scattered remnants of the population revert to a nomad life; the hill in happier times a vineyard whereon grew a thousand vines, each valued at a piece of silver, shall become a covert for game; “with arrows and bows shall men go thither” to hunt the animals lodged among its matted foliage; while the few people left shall depend upon the milk of their cattle and the honey of the wild bees: and so few shall be their number, that in the undisputed enjoyment of the pasture, the man who “shall possess but a young cow, and two sheep, for the abundance of the milk that they shall give, shall eat butter; for butter and honey—not corn-bread and wine—shall

every one eat that is left in the land." It is the picture of a settler's life in some fertile but unreclaimed country, surrounded by the rank luxuriance of nature, rich in the produce of his herds, and in the game with which the neighbouring woods supply him; but where society does not exist, without tillage, without civilization, and without political life: full of hope, it may be, to him who looks forward to the time when his cabin may be the site of a populous city, but miserable and forlorn to one who sees around him the decaying relics of former greatness, and whose tent is pitched amidst the ruins of his country's prosperity.

Now, as a matter of fact, the invasions of Tiglath-Pileser did not reduce the land to this last stage of desolation; a desolation so complete, that the metaphor used by the Prophet is probably the strongest ever penned by any writer, "For the Lord shall shave with a hired razor, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet;" the last, that is to say, and most worthless, and most out-of-the-way remains of the past prosperity of Judah. Even the far more disastrous campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar, which did reduce the land to abject misery, scarcely reach to the extreme and utter wasting depicted here: so that plainly the Prophet's words have a higher reference. For as the deliverance of Ahaz becomes to his gaze the deliverance of the human race, as the sign of a local event becomes the sign given to the world in the incarnation of the Son of God, so the sin of Ahaz typifies

the sin of the human race. In the consequences of that sin, even Messiah Himself must share; He, too, partakes of the vinegar and the gall, of human woe, and of the punishment which the justice of God inflicts upon sin.

I am aware that the Fathers give a different interpretation of the passage, and that they regard it as a proof only of the human nature of the Messiah, who, in Jerome's words, "was no phantom," but in very deed a child, and who, as such, "was fed upon children's food." But butter and honey are not the food of children, and signify here the punishment inflicted upon unrepented sin. This punishment the Immanuel, as Israel's representative, bears:—"Butter and honey He shall eat,"—shall become "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

And this is to continue up to the time of His knowing how to refuse the evil and choose the good, לְיָצִיטוֹ; not always shall He be a suffering Messiah, "wounded for our transgressions," but at length "the government shall be placed upon His shoulder, and of the increase of His government and its peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."

In conclusion, there is yet one consideration which may serve to confirm the preceding interpretation; and this is the form and arrangement of the prophecy. For it is plain even to a cursory reader that the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth verses of the seventh

chapter form a summary, as it were, of the whole, each part of which is afterwards more fully developed, only with the order so far changed, that the Immanuel's glories form the summit and crowning-point, where the Prophet extols Him as the Child, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." To draw out this parallel is unnecessary, as it requires only a perusal of the passage to perceive it; only it may be as well to observe, that the two concluding verses of the eighth chapter belong to and must be taken with the first seven verses of the ninth. If so we read them, we shall find in them the misery described in the seventh chapter under the image of the desolation of Judah generalized and spiritualized. We have the picture of men looking upon the earth, "and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish, and accumulated darkness," as Louth renders it; or rather, darkness driven, close pressed together; but as they walk onward in this darkness they see a great light; for the Sun of Righteousness arises upon a world in misery, because of sin, and brings it healing upon His wings.

And thus, then, both the examination of the prophecy as a whole, and also the more exact consideration of its several parts, confirm the translation of the Septuagint, that the sign of Israel's deliverance was the birth of a virgin's child. To Christians this is the sole possible interpretation, both because St. Matthew has impressed upon it the stamp of his authority, and because otherwise the taint of impurity would have

attached itself to the person of our Lord<sup>1</sup>, and He would have been, not an Immanuel, God and man,—man of the substance of His mother, and God, because “the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her,”—but man only. Not, therefore, without reason have both Jewish controversialists, and the rationalists of later times, tried to weaken the force of the Prophet’s testimony, because if the miraculous conception of our Lord could be disproved, the whole aspect of the Christian religion would be changed, and the Redeemer become a pattern merely for our example, but no longer God manifest in the flesh, the merits of whose death are a sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. But, as ever is found to be the case, the religion of Christ survives every attack upon it: in every age men shift their ground of objection, and marshal in array fresh difficulties, or restate the difficulties of former times; and when a few years have passed, their objections and difficulties are looked upon as exploded fallacies, and people wonder how they could have been held by men of sense, and others frightened at their sound. And ever, I believe, the more closely Holy Scripture is searched, the more sure and certain will the basis be found upon which our faith is built; and though for a time specious arguments may ruffle the surface of the deep current of belief, they will serve finally only to illustrate and establish the truth they were meant to overthrow.

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xii. 2.

## SERMON II.

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ISAIAH ix. 6.

*“Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”*

THE consideration of the prophecy of the Immanuel would be incomplete without a closer examination of the passage with which it concludes than was possible in the previous discourse. There is not, however, the same difficulty here as in the defence of the Messianic interpretation of the earlier portion of the prophecy: for modern commentators have there exerted their utmost powers in the endeavour to shew that the Immanuel was Isaiah's or Ahaz' son; and have imagined the circumstances to be so favourable to their efforts as to ensure them an easy victory. Here, on the contrary, there is a very general consent on their part to the belief that the Messiah is the person whom the magnificent words of the Prophet describe; and even those who, like Gesenius, argue that they refer to Hezekiah, yet acknowledge that there are grouped round him hopes and aspirations which belonged to Messiah alone. It is in the Talmud that the idea first appears that Hezekiah was the son in whose birth the Prophet saw the advent of an era

of glory for the Jewish people; but the reason of this application of the text, so unlike the manner in which generally the traditions of the Jews are so true to the national conviction that the prophets in all similar passages spoke of the Messiah, is to us confirmatory rather than the contrary of the belief that our Lord is the object of Isaiah's words. For their difficulty lay in the phrase "The mighty God." They had hardened themselves into the settled belief that Messiah was to be a national hero, their Cyrus, and Alexander, who should command their armies, win for them battles, found for them an empire, and establish their supremacy over the hated heathen; he was to be a man, whose sons should reign in his stead: and therefore the title, "The Mighty God," contradicted their expectations, and in enmity to the Christian interpretation they sought for some other person to whom they might apply the words. It is evident, therefore, that the translation whereby modern commentators make this title signify nothing, had not suggested itself to them. For these tell us, that according to the idiom of the Hebrew language the words may mean only 'a Godlike hero;' whereas the Jews themselves translated it 'a strong God<sup>a</sup>,' and were not aware in their expositions of the possibility of rendering it in any other way. To the Christian this phrase is the strongest proof that the Prophet was speaking of Christ; for in Him only has God become incarnate in the flesh: and as he reads the titles whereby the dignity of the child is shadowed forth, he thinks with

<sup>a</sup> Ben Sira, f. 40, ed. Amst.



reverence upon the mystery of the Godhead united with the manhood, whereby Jesus of Nazareth was able to be the Prince of Peace, the Reconciler of lost man unto a just though merciful God.

Those commentators who, on the contrary, consider that Hezekiah was the child signified by the Prophet, generally rest their argument upon the possibility of translating Isaiah's words in a manner less forcible than that which seems to be their natural signification. They tell us that they need mean nothing more than "Wonder-Counsellor, Godlike Hero, Booty-distributor, Prince of Peace<sup>b</sup>," and that consequently they were but the courtly flattery of the Prophet to the youthful Prince, who being then ten years old, already shewed the promise of that submissiveness to the prophetic school, which made him in after years the very pattern of a theocratic king. It does not strike them that these titles so understood become an absurdity; that it is a contradiction for the prince of peace, who fights neither for safety nor for conquest, to be also a mighty hero, and the divider of spoil. War, in his days, is absolutely to cease. "For the boot of the greaved warrior arming for the battle-cry, and the garment rolled in blood, shall be for burning and for fuel of fire." The tranquillity of the times shall be so deep, so unbroken, that men shall burn their armour and military accoutrements, as useless,—“for of the increase of the peace of his government there shall be no end;” and yet they tell us that it is a military hero who rules over them, a giant champion, who enriches his fol-

<sup>b</sup> Bunsen, *Bibelwerk*.

lowers by the spoil gathered by successful inroads upon the neighbouring states !

In the youthful Hezekiah there were no traces of this character ; nothing in the boy which could suggest the hope of his ever commanding an army in battle, but rather the marks of a gentle and affectionate disposition, more ready to follow than to lead, pious and confiding, but with much of the weakness and irresolution of his father Ahaz. There was doubtless in him much to love, but little of that strength, and firmness, and determination which would have justified even a flatterer at court in addressing to him such titles as these.

The translation of Gesenius differs considerably from that of Bunsen given above, and is as follows :— “ Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty Hero, the eternal Father, the Prince of Peace : ” but he considers that by the words, “ the eternal Father, ” nothing more is meant than “ the constant, unremitting benefactor of the people. ” In what way Hezekiah could have justified the expectation that he would prove a mighty hero, he does not say ; for he himself describes him as “ a pious prince, devoted to the interests of the theocracy, and probably brought up under its influence. ” As such he suggested hopes not destined to be fulfilled ; or rather, perhaps, he adds, “ the Messianic time was a sort of golden age, upon which the prophets were wont to dilate in poetic terms, and which they ever regarded as immediately about to be established, and not unfrequently, therefore, took some living person as the centre round whom they hung their predictions. ”

But even so, the character of the young prince must already have been sufficiently developed in those warm climates for the Prophet to have known full well what were its chief traits; nor can we imagine that so powerful a writer, whose words ever so exactly convey his meaning, would apply to him epithets altogether contrary to his real disposition.

Nor must we forget that the final revision of the prophecy took place at least twenty years later, when Hezekiah had long sat upon the throne, and when the inroads of Shalmaneser upon the northern provinces, and the threatening aspect of Assyria, made it evident that his reign would not be one of peace; and that he did not himself possess the qualities which would fit him for military enterprises in the field. What wonder if under such circumstances, with so deep a gloom settling round Jerusalem, with the face of things so threatening, and men everywhere so hard bestead, the Prophet turned to the hope of Israel, the promise which was so often their support in trouble, even Messiah's coming, who should be in very deed their "Mighty God."

But leaving these general considerations, we may remark, that the terms of the prophecy in no respect belong to Hezekiah: for, first, it is difficult to believe that the Prophet could say "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," of one who was then fast arriving at maturity. Hezekiah's age at the invasion of Pekah is variously estimated at from ten to thirteen years; at eight years old we read of Josiah, that "he began

to seek after the God of his father David ;” and in his twelfth year “he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from idolatry.” Manasseh, at twelve years old, equally determinately set himself upon working evil. At twelve years old Hezekiah would have been fit to share in the labours of government, it is in the East the age of puberty and marriage ; nor would it have been fitting for Isaiah to use of him at such an age terms of rejoicing fit only for his birth.

And, next, the countries referred to were not provinces of Hezekiah’s kingdom. The great light, of whose rising the Prophet speaks, is not for Judah and Jerusalem, but for Zabulon and Naphthali,—regions over which Hezekiah exerted no influence. Had he been thinking of Hezekiah he would have spoken of places where the King’s reign had brought some small measure of prosperity : instead of this, it is Galilee of the Gentiles, the border land where Jew and heathen lived in such close contact that the name of Galilæan was a mark of contempt for the Jew of the holy city, and where the invading hordes of Assyria had made the danger so great that the inhabitants had the shadow of death ever resting upon them. We know of no possibility whereby Hezekiah could have benefited the distant region beyond Jordan : but it was there that Messiah taught ; by the way of that sea of Tiberias He spake His parables ; in the cities on its coast He dwelt ; and the people of Jerusalem were offended at it, and said, “Search and look : for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”

Again, the description of the kingdom which this

child shall reign over cannot possibly belong to Hezekiah. It is a kingdom of peace; but Isaiah full well knew that there was but slight chance of peace for his nation. The chief part of the previous portion of the prophecy consists of a most emphatic denunciation of the evils which would be the sure consequence of Ahaz' having tempted the arms of Assyria towards their borders. And in the verses which precede the text, he mentions the comparatively slight affliction of Tiglath-Pileser's invasion, and the heavier calamity brought upon the country by Shalmaneser. The more wasting inroads of Sennacherib, his full purpose to subdue the land, were public facts which Isaiah could not but have known. And yet he says, "Of the increase of his government and of its peace there shall be no end:" it shall be a constantly augmenting peace; an ever-growing and eternal rule, which God shall establish with righteousness and judgment for ever. Such terms Isaiah could not possibly have applied to Hezekiah, even as the expression of flattering hopes in his younger years; much less at a time when the land was wasted by the perpetual inroads of Assyria, and Hezekiah had shewed none of the qualities which would have enabled him to cope with the troubles of his time, except it be that chief one, of an unwavering trust in God.

And again: as Herder remarks<sup>c</sup>, "We have here no birthday ode, in praise of Hezekiah, or Hezekiah's son, but the tale of a king, who bears all the names and blessings which belonged to the race of David,

<sup>c</sup> *Ebr. Po.*, ii. 437.

and whose coming shall bring with it the promised golden age of happiness." For in connection with this prophecy must be taken, both such passages as that in the second chapter concerning "the establishing of the house of the Lord upon the top of the mountains," and that in the fourth, where we read of "the beauty of the branch of the Lord for them that are escaped of Israel;" and also Psalms such as the seventy-second, in which the reign of the Messiah is described as one of extended and eternal peace. For no exposition can be so unsatisfactory as that which ignores the ideas, and hopes, and feelings of the times when the prophets lived; and it is only by thus isolating passages, by taking them as fragments disjointed from the main stream of Jewish thought, that it is possible to imagine that titles such as these meant nothing more than the hope of a successful reign. None can doubt that the Jews did look forward to an era of great glory; they regarded themselves truly as God's chosen people, who might be punished for a time, but were sure finally to receive the rich inheritance of His favour. Call it, with Gesenius, if you will, an ideal golden age, a mistake, a vain expectation; but the fact remains, that the prophets fostered and strengthened among the people this expectation: and granting this, which no one can deny, why must the words of Isaiah be here unnaturally forced to lose their meaning? The prophets did believe in a coming golden age: they did believe that their nation had the promise of a peculiar and emphatic blessedness; and that this glorious era would

be inaugurated by the advent of a great national hero : and if so, to what do these words more naturally apply than to these national hopes ? And possibly their meaning would never have been doubted, had it been simply a Jewish literature whose remains we were studying, which ended with the Jews, and the hopes of which had been rudely crushed with disappointment, as they were really crushed for those who rejected Christ. Another interpretation is sought, because Christians attach to the words a higher and spiritual meaning : a meaning not confined to one nation, but embracing all mankind, and whereby it is no Jewish king, but a universal Saviour, sprung from the lineage of Jewish kings, who is "the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

We cannot even grant that the Prophet unites Hezekiah and the Messiah here in one general outline. The prophets, doubtless, did often start from some present subject, but that they confused the two together, the present and the future, is a very different thing. If, here, Hezekiah is the child who is born unto us, he must also be the Immanuel, the Virgin's child ; but his age forbids. He was on the verge of maturity : the Almah's child was not yet able to discern good and evil ; was not yet two or three years old. But we demand more. If Hezekiah and the Prince of Peace are the same, Hezekiah must be a type of Christ ; the prophecy must be true of him in a lower sense, because he shadowed out what Christ was in a higher sense ; for it is only where persons or things stand thus related that the double sense of

prophecy is admissible. A prophecy may be partially true of the Jewish Church, and wholly true of the Christian Church, because the one was the type and outline of the other; and similarly a prophecy might in a partial sense belong to Hezekiah if he were a type of the Messiah. But this would be granting more than they wish: nor does it seem to be the case that Hezekiah did typify Christ.

Generally, however, commentators of the modern school reject the view taken by Gesenius, that the Prophet mingled with his present subject the hopes of an ideal future. They would ever tie him tightly down to the present, and affirm that the tense which he uses, and which speaks of each act as just performed, prevents our looking to the future at all for the fulfilment. But this is an erroneous view of the language of the prophets; and the very name given to them in Scripture may help us to a more correct understanding of their office. They are called seers, and their writings visions,—“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz.” Events therefore passed before their mental eye, and they describe them as such; as simple facts without the idea of time. A spectacle offered to the eye does not carry the notion of time with it: a picture may represent the past, the present, or the future, and we may know this from its accessories, by the inference of the judgment, but not by the sight as such. Similarly the visions of the prophets are without time: if time is revealed, as in the seventy weeks of Daniel, it becomes itself the object of the vision,—it is itself the idea impressed upon the



mind, and not an accompaniment of it. But where time is not itself the thing revealed, the facts of revelation are not described as in the pages of history, as they are connected with, and follow upon, and grow out of one another; but are narrated as facts merely, which had been disclosed to the prophets, but which future ages must arrange in their proper place, as one by one they are fulfilled.

And this accounts for the fact remarked by Lowth, that the temporal are constantly united with the spiritual deliverances of the people. So, in the next chapter<sup>d</sup>, the fall of Assyria suddenly gives way to the description of Messiah's reign. So, in the last twenty-seven chapters, the deliverance of Judah from exile alternates with that of the world from sin and Satan. So with our Lord: the judgment of God upon Jerusalem, and the escape of the Christian Church, give place to the picture of the last judgment, with His people standing at His right hand. The tenses, therefore, in this present prophecy must follow the general rule of all prophecy: if there is in them anything special and peculiar, let it be marked and fully weighed; but if the birth of the child—"a child is born"—is declared in the sense which prophecy always uses, the tense descriptive of the immediate past, it is but folly to adduce it as a proof that Isaiah must have been speaking of Hezekiah, because his birth had already taken place.

The terms, then, of the prophecy are not in them-

<sup>d</sup> Isa. x. 33, 34.

selves such as point to Hezekiah. If he were the person meant by the Prophet, we must not only affirm, with Gesenius, that Isaiah's hopes ended in disappointment, but we could not account for his making Galilee the scene of the happiness he foretels, nor for his ascribing military qualities to so peaceful a prince. The external grounds therefore fail, which might have given a colourable excuse for applying force to the translation of the titles with which Isaiah invests the new-born child. A forced and unnatural translation is always unsatisfactory, but especially so when it is made only to support a theory. The words literally signify, "They shall call His name 'a Wonder,'" the verb being put impersonally—"one shall call;" and the abstract noun, 'wonder,' מִוִּפְרָא, being used for the concrete, 'wonderful,' and implying that there should be in Him something marvellous, extraordinary, beyond the common order of nature. And next He is a Counsellor, מְדַבֵּר; a word which some have united with the former, as if it signified 'one wonderful in counsel:' but, as Gesenius remarks, this conjunction "is in direct opposition to the usual character of similar enumerations." Really, counsel marks one of the highest duties of government; and we even find the counsellor and the king in close juxtaposition. So, for instance, Micah iv. 9, "Why dost thou cry aloud? Is there no king in thee? Is thy counsellor perished?" And here it fitly describes Him in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom, and who is the Teacher and Ruler of His Church as well as its Redeemer. Thus far, however, there is but little

dispute: it is the next title which has roused the zeal of controversialists. For Isaiah calls Him a "Mighty God," אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר; and that the words are to be taken together we have the unbiassed judgment, as shewn by the accentuation, of the Masorites, or rather of the Jewish tradition which they faithfully represent. Now it is remarkable that this very title occurs in the next chapter<sup>e</sup>: "The remnant shall return (Shear-Jashub), even the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God." How absurd is the rendering of Gesenius here, "They shall return to the strong hero<sup>f</sup>!" But not more so than his reasoning; for he remarks, "One might very well here, in conformity with most ancient versions, render it by 'the Mighty God,' but it is better to take it in both places in the same way<sup>g</sup>." In other words, the place where the meaning is certain, must bend to one on the interpretation of which men have thrown doubts! Still Gesenius does not here obstinately keep to his former view, but frankly says, "The title אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר above, in chap. ix. 6, signified the Messiah; here it means Jehovah:" and his argument even there is nothing more than the fact, that the word for God, אֱלֹהִים, is occasionally used in the Hebrew language in an inferior sense. So, for instance, in Ezek. xxxi. 11, Nebuchadnezzar is called אֱלֹהֵי גוֹיִם, "God of the heathen," rendered in our version "the Mighty One:" but the satire contained in the appellation is evident, and the implied contrast between the heathen who could worship a man, and the Jew who worshipped the God of heaven. Besides,

<sup>e</sup> Isa. x. 21.<sup>f</sup> *Theo. sub* גִּבּוֹר<sup>g</sup> Ad cap. x. 21.

Nebuchadnezzar did claim divine homage from his subjects, and the image which he set up in the plains of Dura was most probably his own. So also in Ezek. xxxii. 21, in similar mockery the dead kings of the heathen nations are spoken of as אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹרִים, "mighty gods," calling in derision from the grave to the King of Egypt as he descends to join their company.

The language of Isaiah is not, however, to be judged of by that of Ezekiel, but by his own use of words; for it would be difficult to find two writers more unlike one another in style than these two prophets. And the fact, therefore, that in the next chapter Isaiah undoubtedly applies this title to Jehovah, has made both Ewald and Hitzig, and even Knobel, translate it in the ordinary way; to say nothing of the numerous German critics who consistently defend the Messianic interpretation.

Even Gesenius is scarcely really opposed to us. For if in the one chapter the title belongs to Messiah, and in the other to Jehovah, we may well ask, How does it happen that God and the Messiah both share this title? What is this "mighty heroship" which they have in common? The difficulty is not removed, but evaded: it is but shifted a little. Better say at once, with Hitzig, that it is an Oriental exaggeration; or with Knobel, that Messiah is so called because the strength of God would be with him in his wars; thus we at least know where we are; but these weak attempts at lessening the meaning only betray an unwillingness openly to profess a disbelief in the existence of anything supernatural in the Jewish Scrip-

tures. Assert that the Bible is an ordinary book, and the consideration of its various parts is labour thrown away: we must first settle whether a revelation has been given,—whether inspiration, whatever it be, is a reality; until then the two parties have no common ground. The believer in revelation neither can nor will treat the Bible as he would Livy or Herodotus; while he who denies a revelation can have no interest beyond a faint curiosity in discussing the meaning of isolated passages in a work destitute of authority: for if the meaning which he disputes is shewn to be correct, it does but add one to the numerous mistakes and errors which he thinks he has already detected. The value of interpretation lies with those who acknowledge the authority of the Scriptures, and are anxious therefore to know their true meaning.

Another translation has been offered by Ewald, who, while he grants that אֱלֹהִים means God, thinks that אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת may mean a “hero-God;” a God of armies, who reveals Himself as a warrior. But Meier has shewn that the idiom of the Hebrew language would in that case require אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת; and thus we are driven back to the rendering of the ancient versions, and of the Jews themselves: a translation which would naturally suggest itself to every reader at first sight, and which only an elaborate criticism, bent upon the overthrow of all ancient landmarks, would venture to dispute.

The next title, “Father of Eternity,” though generally accepted, has nevertheless been the object of a similar attack. For the word which is rendered

'eternity,' and is so used in places beyond number in Holy Scripture, is of similar form with a very rare noun, thrice found there, and which means 'booty.' The Spanish Jew, therefore, Abravanel, in his polemical writings against Christianity, suggested that the words might be rendered 'Father of booty;' but even so, an idiom had to be appealed to, of unusual occurrence in Hebrew, though not uncommon in Arabic, by which 'Father' is used in the sense of possessor. Thus "Father of mercy" means "the merciful;" and so "Father of eternity" would mean "the eternal," and "Father of booty" the "booty-owner." In this strange perversion of ingenuity Abravanel has found but few followers. It is contemptuously rejected by Gesenius, who denies even that this idiom is admissible in Hebrew, but adopted by Hitzig, and, as we have previously seen, by Bunsen. For the Messiah it is a title absolutely unbecoming: He is "the Prince of Peace." True, He spoils the strong man of his goods, by delivering men from Satan: but this title suggests only a military conqueror, who wastes the lands of his weaker neighbours, that he may enrich his soldiers with the prizes of rapine and pillage.

In our Lord the whole passage finds a natural and adequate fulfilment. He came unto men hard beset for want of a Saviour: His birthplace was at Nazareth, in the tribe of Zabulon; His dwelling at Capernaum, in the tribe of Naphthali. Round the sea of Galilee He wrought His miracles, and taught His parables upon its shores. In the depth of the

spiritual degradation of the people He came to bring life and immortality to light ; to teach a pure morality ; to raise men to a holy life ; to fill them with heavenly desires ; to give them motives strong enough to enable them to live purely, soberly, and righteously, in a world full of temptations. To His birth all Christian nations turn, as to the advent of the one true hope of the world : if God did not then visit His people, there has been no revelation given ; God has not spoken to man, and man still dwells in darkness and in the land of the shadow of death ; for he has nothing left to help him, except the dim and uncertain light of natural religion. But if the Son of God did then become incarnate in the flesh, what difficulty is there in believing that holy men of God were inspired of old by the Holy Ghost, to give from time to time indications of the approach of so miraculous an event ? At that birth commenced an era of peace,—not for worldly men, who refuse to submit to the terms of the great salvation then wrought ; God has not increased their joy ; but for the soul whose sins have been forgiven, and which has been reconciled, by the Saviour's work, to God. It is the soul the yoke of whose burden Christ has broken, the staff laid upon its shoulder, the rod of Satan its oppressor. Were it, however, the case that Christian principles exerted their proper influence upon men,—did they regulate the conduct of states one toward another, then would wars cease. For wars spring out of injustice : the injustice which the law curbs between man and man, is punished in states too powerful for the law by the scourge of war.

The time may yet come when Christianity shall influence states as now it influences individuals; and then shall the equipment of the warrior, and his garments rolled in blood, be for burning and for fuel of fire. To this full development of Christian principles the Prophet looked forward,—to a golden age of happiness and peace: and worthily therefore did he conclude his prophecy with the titles of Him who is God and man; who is in very truth a Miracle, in that in the flesh He was also the invisible God, whom no man hath seen nor can see: who is “the Wisdom of God,” the divine Reason, the Word, by whom all things were made, and without whom “was not any thing made which was made:” who is the Mighty God, God of God, God of one substance with the Father: who is the Everlasting Father, one with the Father, Himself eternal, and the giver to others of everlasting life: who, lastly, is the Prince of Peace, who broke down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile, who filled up the impassable gulf between God and man by being a Mediator,—one with God, by right of His divinity, one with man by sharing our human nature. Lastly, “of the increase of His government, and of its peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.” Hezekiah did not sit on David’s throne; at most he had but the two tribes left for Rehoboam; his was no eternal kingdom; there was no increasing peace in his troubled times, but ever increasing danger. “The throne of David” means wide-spread dominion;



the Jew saw in it the type of universal empire; and such shall in due time be the kingdom of Christ. For, quoting this prophecy, the angel Gabriel said to the Blessed Virgin, "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end."

## SERMON III.

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ISAIAH xi. 1, 2.

*“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him.”*

THE prophecy of which this verse is the central point stands in close parallelism with that of the Immanuel. The same anxieties are pressing upon the Prophet's mind, and he looks to the same hope for consolation. For once again danger is at hand. Then it was the confederate hosts of Samaria and Damascus advancing to besiege the city; now it is Assyria, which, in opposition to the divine warning, the weak Ahaz had invited to his rescue, and found in it an enemy worse than those who had then threatened his ruin. And ever in the time of danger there was but one solace to which the house of David could look for security and confidence; and that was the certainty that from their line a deliverer would spring, in whom all the promises of God spoken to His people would be accomplished,—from the promise made to Eve, as she stood trembling and abashed to receive her sentence, to the last words of David's consolation, that “of the fruit of his body God would set upon his throne.”

In Jerusalem itself the circumstances were very different: for the King was now full of faith in God, and submissive to the counsels of the Prophet; whereas then Ahaz, wavering and irresolute, and eagerly catching at the hope of any earthly deliverance, was yet obstinate in his disobedience and refusal to listen to God's commands:—"Ask thee a sign." "I will not ask a sign." And therefore the Prophet, even while commissioned to assure him of the ultimate safety of his kingdom, nevertheless clearly set before him the punishment which his realm must bear, because of his obdurate persistence in a wrong and irreligious policy. He reminded him therefore that Jerusalem could not perish; that there was a peculiar promise bound up with it, and especially with his house, which ensured for it the special protection of God's providence. The general prediction of the woman's seed had been limited first to the descendants of Abraham, and then to the family of David, and no word of the Most High could fail. "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son." But with all this he coupled the sore wasting which should desolate his kingdom. For "butter and honey shall He eat,"—the products of a land wild and uncultivated; and instead of the numerous population and careful tillage, which had covered the most barren rocks with terraces on which grew vines of so choice a sort, that "a thousand vines were valued at a thousand silverlings," the people should be too few for the labours of husbandry; the fields everywhere abandoned; and the land, left to a state of nature, should yield the means of subsistence to a few wanderers, so

scanty in number that from the abundance of grass the man who had a young cow and two sheep should have milk in plenty,—there being none to share with him the pasture; and honey without stint, from the numerous swarms of wild bees which, undisturbed by man, plied their busy labours amidst solitudes, where thronging multitudes had once pursued the active duties of life.

But even in her humiliation the land bore a charmed existence. The hope of the world's deliverance was bound up with her narrow fortunes; and therefore, though she sit in darkness, she must see a great light; and though for a time she dwell in the land of the shadow of death, yet must the sunlight arise upon her: for unto her a child must be born, whose names are the titles of Omnipotence, and "of whose government there shall be no end."

As I then shewed, the date of this prophecy in its present form is many years later than the principal historical event embodied in it. For Isaiah, in the first verse of the ninth chapter, alludes to occurrences long subsequent: and there is much which makes it probable that it was several years after Hezekiah came to the throne that it was finally published to the people of Jerusalem in the shape in which we at present read it, and in which the sign given to Ahaz and the birth of Mahershalal are detailed in an historical narrative, from which the Prophet rises to his magnificent prediction of the Messiah as "the Mighty God." Nor is this at variance with the ordinary method of God's dealings with mankind, whereby to those who

have, more is given, while from those who have not, even their little is taken away. To Ahaz God gave at most a sign obscure and hard to understand; a sign which seemed to be no sign, except to those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel: but to the pious Hezekiah the prophecy is repeated, and its meaning is made plain; and though the warning still remains, though the land which has withdrawn itself from God's shelter must bear its punishment, yet are such sad thoughts alleviated by the assurance that in His due time Messiah shall be revealed, and that of His peace there shall be no end.

At the time of the present prophecy danger again threatened Jerusalem. The Assyrian king, elate with conquest, is gathering his hosts; and his messengers, as they stand upon the city's walls, taunt the weakness of Hezekiah with offers of horses if he can set riders thereon. But the King looks not abroad for help: he spreads the letter before the Lord, and sends to Isaiah to intercede for him. There is, therefore, now no word of reproach; no thought of blame escapes the Prophet's lips: his business is simply to reassure the hearts of both King and people, sinking at the greatness of their danger, and to convey to them the certainty of their escape.

This also accounts for the striking difference of manner in which Isaiah in the two prophecies expresses the same great truth. In both alike it is the Messiah's birth, the Messiah's kingdom, of which he speaks: but in the first prophecy Ahaz was untrue to himself, his kingdom, and his God; and therefore the

Prophet's words are those of rebuke and indignation, of wrath and punishment. Even when he comes there to the promise of restoration, when he sets before them the certainty of Messiah's advent, and of their preservation as the necessary consequence, he still describes these their national hopes with a vigour and intensesness commensurate with the energy of his previous threatenings. But here, in this present prophecy, all is consolation, and therefore the greater evenness of style and the closer minuteness of description as he enumerates the spiritual qualities of the Ruler, the change in the characters of the ruled, and the universality of the Messiah's kingdom.

The prophecy commences at the fifth verse of the tenth chapter, in which Isaiah apostrophizes Assyria as the rod of God's anger commissioned to punish such nations as by their conduct had exposed themselves to the divine wrath; and the remaining verses of that chapter describe the boasting language of its king, elate with the ease and rapidity of his victories, vain of his personal prowess and military skill, and ignorant that he was but an instrument in the hands of the Almighty, and that in due time punishment would with equal certainty overtake his own sins. The Assyrian empire must fall, as Calno and Carchemish had fallen, but even before then the justice of God would visit Sennacherib himself. In minute detail the Prophet next describes his march upon Jerusalem, enumerating one by one the various places through which he would pass, choosing for him, not

the ordinary beaten route by which peaceful travellers would have journeyed from the frontier to the capital, but one difficult, and easy of defence, had Hezekiah been as able a general in the field as he was good and pious and believing: but the suddenness of the inroad and the bold tactics of Sennacherib paralyzed his efforts:—"They are gone over the passage," exclaims the Prophet; they have threaded the defile between Micmash and Geba, where a few hardy men might have disputed their way. Too narrow for carriages, they have left their baggage behind, and press on unencumbered, and are now close at hand. They are within sight of the holy city, and Sennacherib in triumph shakes his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

Very different opinions have been held as to the route here described; some thinking that it was the actual road taken by the invading army, while others suppose that it is an ideal march, the work of the imagination only. Those of the modern school who hold that it was the actual route of the Assyrian army, would wish us therefore to believe that the prophecy must have been written after the invasion had taken place\*: for it is a canon of their criticism, that whenever a prophecy agrees with the facts of history, no other proof is required that it was written after the facts had occurred. The narrative in chap. xxxvii. is indeed totally irreconcilable with this theory; but we may dismiss its consideration: for the essence of the present prophecy does not lie in

\* Hitzig, *in loc.*

its historical reference to Hezekiah and Sennacherib, but in its application to our Lord.

From his narrative of the invasion, the Prophet passes over, by an easy transition, to the future time. For in the last two verses of the tenth chapter he had abruptly concluded his description of the proud king's triumphal progress with his sudden and terrible downfall. Like some mighty cedar, he is felled in the very hour of his pride. "For, lo! the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, lops the branches of this mighty tree with terrific violence, and the tall growing trees shall be hewn down, and the high trees brought low: yea, He shall cut down the thickets of this forest, the multitudes of this Assyrian host, with iron, and this Lebanon by that mighty angel who in one night smote their camp with death." And from this, by a natural antithesis, rendered plain immediately that we read the eleventh chapter in connection with the tenth, he proceeds to foretell Messiah's advent:—"But a rod shall spring forth from the hewn-down trunk of Jesse, and a sucker from his roots shall bring forth fruit."

Now from the root of a cedar no sucker ever springs; when once the axe has laid it low, no tree of that species can live on any longer in a life derived from its own roots: and similarly Assyria falls for ever. Its work is over; and as men search among its ruins they find the records of a past greatness which can never again find a place amidst the things of this world. Great cities, Baghdad and Mosul, may yet rise upon the banks of the Tigris, but in their streets the same lofty-featured race is no more seen,



whose lineaments are sculptured on the remains of Nineveh. It is not so with the Davidic line; it has and will have a place throughout all ages in the present fortunes of the world: for "like the terebinth-tree and the oak, though they be cut down, yet is there substance in them;"—there is in them, according to the literal meaning of the word, that which will make them stand up "a new stem<sup>b</sup>." In a word, the earthly kingdom of David will pass away; but in its place must arise the spiritual dominion of Messiah, David's Son.

Before, however, we proceed to the more exact consideration of the text, it may be useful to say a few words concerning the shorter prediction, placed between the two great prophecies of the Immanuel and the rod of Jesse, and occupying part of the ninth, and four verses of the tenth, chapter. It was spoken against the kingdom of Samaria, and is remarkable for the regularity of its form, as it consists of four odes, of equal length, and each ending with the refrain, "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." Of these odes, the first rebukes the pride of Samaria; the second, her obduracy under punishment; the third, her anarchy; and the fourth, the injustice of her princes, who under cover of those lawless times had perverted judgment, "taking away the right of the poor, to make widows their prey, and to rob the fatherless." Its date is easy to settle; for when in the first ode Samaria is

<sup>b</sup> Isa. vi. 13.

represented as saying, "The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars," Isaiah certainly refers to the invasion of Tiglath-Pileser in B.C. 740. For he inflicted no serious injury upon the land: the buildings indeed which had been commenced must be abandoned under the temporary pressure of his presence, and would fall into ruin; the sycomores which stood in the line of his army's march would be cut down for fuel; but, encouraged by his ill success, they would, upon his retreat, recommence their labours with greater boldness, and in fancied security would plant their lands with choicer trees.

On the other hand, the anarchy described in the third ode, and the lawlessness in the fourth, must refer to some period during the nine years' struggle for the crown by Hosea after he had murdered Pekah. And as this turbulence had reached its height, and produced general misery, so that "they snatched on the right hand, and were hungry; and ate on the left hand, and were not satisfied," we may conclude that the prophecy was written two or three years prior to Hosea's finally gaining the mastery in B.C. 730.

The arrangement, therefore, of the three prophecies is chronological: the first referring to the time when Samaria was still a powerful military despotism under Pekah; the second, a warning to her in the years of anarchy which followed that monarch's murder; the third, a consolation to Jerusalem in her alarm at the impending invasion of Sennacherib, and, therefore,

subsequent by at least ten years to the death of Hosea, and the destruction of Samaria by Shalmaneser.

And now to turn to the import of the prophecy, we find the same character impressed upon it which marks all prophecy; for the immediate and temporal deliverance is used only as the occasion from which the Prophet rises to future and spiritual blessings. As he advances on his way, he casts behind him the local interests and narrow fortunes of the nation considered in its mere political aspect, that he may the more boldly reach onwards to the earth-wide salvation bound up with the existence of Israel. For Jerusalem has not only her own history; she is the type also of the Church in the world: and her struggles with Assyria and Babylon were to her what to the Church is the struggle with sin and Satan. And just as hers was but a chequered history, with evil more frequently triumphant than good, and with her promises of happiness never fulfilled in the sense in which the people expected them, so is it with the Church. Israel was called to be God's peculiar people; was protected by a special providence, and ruled by the direct government of God: but her own highest ambition was to be one of the kingdoms of the world. And therefore her existence was a troubled one, with an occasional hour of triumph, but more frequently trodden under foot by those very nations whose character she aped. And so is it with the Church: she also has times when the faith of her sons shines purely and brightly, and the

blessing of God manifestly rests upon her, because she trusts only in Him. But too often, like her prototype of old, her external aspect too much resembles that of the world: the same objects of desire are sought by her; her motives are too much those of worldly men; there is not that marked difference between the history of the Church and the history of a temporal kingdom, which the essential difference between them might lead us to expect. Yet she too, like the terebinth-tree and the oak, if cut down, has her substance in her, and her mission must last unto the world's end: but she has her "treasure in earthen vessels;" though of God's building, yet men are the instruments by which she works.

In the prophecies we have an example of the manner in which the ministers of the Church of old acted toward those who by virtue of the rite of circumcision had been admitted into covenant with God. For the office of the prophet was not so much to foretell the future, as to warn, and guide, and teach those among whom he lived. And thus we find Isaiah ever placing before both king and people the higher objects of their existence. He sees them untrue to their divine mission; occupied with worldly schemes; busied about human policy; wavering between Assyria and Egypt; seeking their safety in alliances with earthly powers. From all this he calls them away. Their safety is to be found elsewhere. They have been placed by God on earth for a special purpose; they have a moral as well as an actual existence; and as long therefore as they fulfil this purpose, so long they are secure. They

may be cast down, but cannot be destroyed; may be perplexed, but not in despair.

It is this thought which animates the opening words of the prophecy, in which Isaiah addresses Assyria as the rod of God's anger. For thus he at once marks the difference between the two kingdoms. The one has a definite place in the divine economy; the other is used but for a temporary object. For the moment, therefore, it may triumph; but it has no mission of its own, no settled final purpose in the world, and therefore no special providence hems it around. But Jerusalem, however unworthy, was the actual centre of the world's history; and in spite of her feebleness, in spite of her comparative insignificance, she must outlive the far mightier kingdoms of Nineveh and Babylon, and Persia, and Macedon, and Antioch; for upon her existence depended the accomplishment of God's unchanging counsels.

The immediate object of the prophets, therefore, was the moral edification of the people. They pointed out to them their covenant relation with God, and their high calling in the world, in order that they might live worthily of their vocation. Earthly hopes had not really been set before them, but spiritual; they were God's especial people, in whom He would bless all the nations of the earth, and as such, justice, and mercy, and truth ought to be the daily practice of their lives. But in keeping ever in view this distinctive feature of Israel's existence, by which they were unlike all other nations, the exhortations of the prophets naturally pointed onward to the day when the

promise made to them would be fulfilled; and, "moved by the Holy Ghost," they from time to time added such particulars as made the nature of the promised Deliverer stand forth in distincter outline. At first He was "the woman's seed," "the Shiloh," only, and His person and attributes remained untold: by the prophets His life and death, His office and dignity, are so clearly described, that among the many exploded theories of recent times there is one which endeavours to account for the historical character of the Gospels by saying that these supposed facts grew out of the ideas impressed upon the national mind by the writings of the prophets.

But in opposition to this, a class of objectors, from Grotius downwards, have argued that the connexion of the prophecies with Christianity is unreal; that as they started with things present, so must their fulfilment be sought for in contemporary events. They regard Hezekiah, therefore, as the rod of Jesse, and find in his reign that era of peace, when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain." But it is not in this prophecy only that we find Isaiah looking for his consolation in things future; it is the usual character of all his prophecies. The great thought ever present in his mind is the advent of the Messiah. Like a true patriot, he was, doubtless, anxious for the welfare of his country; he had too much influence in Hezekiah's counsels to be indifferent to the fortunes of a monarch who trusted him so well: but the Messiah's coming, and the founding of His kingdom, was ever the real burden of his tale.

Say it was an ideal time, a fancied golden age, a Church of the future, to which he looked forward; still forward he did look. Nay, more; the kingdom of Judah never did answer to his hopes; it never did equal his ideal of the theocratic government. Even in Hezekiah's reign there were powerful factions at court which finally triumphed over Isaiah's influence; and in spite of Sennacherib's defeat, the general aspect of his time is one of disaster. There was little to comfort him in the present; and even we, when we read the description of Messiah's kingdom in the eleventh chapter, must own that it is in great part unfulfilled even now. The wolf does not yet lie down with the lamb. The Prophet may accurately describe the tendencies of Christianity; may describe what the world would be, were Christian principles acted upon; but they are not generally acted upon; and possibly the description never will be fulfilled in the actual history of the world, nor was intended so to be, but belongs to the inner life of the individual. In his heart, by the power of grace, evil principles may cease to rage, and Christ's kingdom of peace may begin here upon earth, to be perfected and made eternal in heaven.

At the commencement, therefore, of the prophecy, Assyria and Sennacherib, Judæa and Hezekiah, have a real place; but Isaiah rapidly turns from them to the future, and his words belong no more to the present actors, but are for all times and all persons. The overthrow of Sennacherib's army, and the deliverance of Jerusalem, are really foretold; but soon

they fade away into the background, and are symbols at most of the victory begun on Calvary and consummated on the morning of the Resurrection: a victory enacted over again in each era of the world whenever influences hostile to pure religion are overcome, and in the believer's life as step by step the Spirit gains the mastery. It follows, therefore, that the connection between the parts of a prophecy is not one of time, is not a matter of chronology; it is the order of cause and effect. Years, nay, cycles of history may pass away before the full effects of the sacrifice of Christ be accomplished,—before, that is to say, the eleventh chapter of Isaiah be completely fulfilled: but the connection is not made thereby less real. For as the seed contains the tree, which yet may require centuries for its development, so is the effect contained in the cause, though cycles of centuries may scarce suffice for its progress to perfection.

In none, perhaps, of Isaiah's prophecies is this better exemplified than in the present. For while the tenth chapter is mainly historical, it serves but as an introduction to the spiritual predictions of the eleventh, in which the historical element disappears. In describing, in the historical portion, the pride of the Assyrian king, Isaiah narrates the conquests of his ancestors in order. Starting from the strong fortress of Circesium on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, and the usual place where the Roman armies crossed that river in their centuries of struggle with the Parthians, we see them advance to Calno upon the Tigris, the future Ctesiphon and chief seat of the Parthian empire.



Master thus of these two rivers, they spread their conquests along the Euphrates to the north-east, and descending the Orontes, take possession of Arpad, the very memory of which has perished, and of Hamath, which, under the name of Epiphania, was subsequently the capital of northern Syria. And having thus skirted the deserts, which form the eastern protection of Palestine, they now bend their course southward; and first Damascus, and next Samaria, fall beneath their arms.

Jerusalem alone remains unsubdued; but Sennacherib advances to complete the conquests of his forefathers. Nor does he doubt of an easy victory: for "he will gather her up as eggs that are left." And as he advances, the Prophet vividly marks his route by the cries and anguish of the villages on his way: to judge by them, his army must have advanced in parallel columns from north to south, through a very difficult country, but where, probably, he would find more abundant supplies than in the beaten route, desolated, apparently, by previous inroads. He meets with no opposition; even in the narrow defile of Michmash no measures have been taken to check his advance. But when the goal is in sight, when he waves his hand in exultation, a terrible overthrow—not by human means, but by the intervention of God—overtakes him. God Himself hews down the stately cedar-tree.

But in the eleventh and twelfth chapters the historical element disappears. Hezekiah has passed away, and in his stead "a Rod has sprung forth.

from the hewn-down stem of Jesse." Upon Him the Spirit rests without measure ; His kingdom is one of peace ; at His bidding the fierce animals of prey change their nature, and dwell in harmony with their former victims. The struggle between nature and man, the struggle between knowledge and ignorance, between vice and virtue, has ceased ; and the whole earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord. Nor is His empire confined to the Jews ; but " the root of Jesse stands also as an ensign to the people, and to it do the Gentiles seek, and His rest has become glorious." Judah, meanwhile, has been visited by evils greater than even the most desponding had foreboded in Hezekiah's time ; for the doom spoken by Moses has overtaken her, and her children have been " scattered among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other." But for her also there is a two-fold restoration : for, first, a remnant is gathered, at the first outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost ; and, finally, God assembles as well the outcasts of Israel as the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth ; and as the reconciliation of earth with God will be then complete, when the Jews everywhere are converted to the faith in Christ, and with them the fulness of the Gentiles has come in, both Jew and Gentile join in the same psalm of praise,—“ Unto the Lord, who hath done excellent things ;” and, “ With joy draw the living waters of the Spirit from the same wells of salvation.”

It is, therefore, now no longer the narrow conflict between Judæa and the Assyrian King which occupies

the Prophet's mind ; it is the eternal conflict, old as man, yet ever new, ever recurring, between good and evil. For this battle the ensign is set up ; and not the Jew only, but all mankind, are summoned to range themselves beneath it. That ensign is the Root of Jesse Himself :—“ For I, if I be lifted up, shall draw all men unto Me.” But the Prophet saw it as we Christians see it, not as an abstract conflict between good and evil, but as a personal struggle between Christ and Satan, between the serpent who tempted Eve and the Immanuel.

And ever the coming forth of this Deliverer is spoken of as something contrary to nature. As the Immanuel, He is described as the Virgin's Child ; and here, as “ a Rod which grows out from a hewn-down tree.” The house of David must be shorn of all its honours ; it must have returned to the same state of private citizenship in which Jesse lived ; its royal dignity must have passed away, the national hopes have ceased to centre in it, and its last remains be regarded with indifference, when from its decaying stem the promised Sceptre shall arise, beneath whose sway the spiritual Israel shall dwell safely.

In the seventeenth chapter of Ezekiel a prophecy occurs, which very closely resembles that of Isaiah in this place. God has just denounced there punishment upon Israel for looking for deliverance to Egypt ; but with punishment is ever mingled mercy. Ezekiel therefore concludes his prophecy with the promise, “ I will also take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it ; I will crop off from the top of

his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon an high mountain and eminent. In the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish." Now it is remarkable how the same general character prevails in all the Messianic prophecies. It is always something beyond the power of nature; no power of nature could make a cutting from a cedar-tree take root and grow; and God Himself calls attention to the fact:—"I have made the dry tree to flourish." But God does what nature could not do; and similarly the Sceptre springs from David's house, when it is in its deepest decay:—"God hath brought down the high tree, hath exalted the low tree."

That the word rendered rod in our Authorized Version does signify a sceptre, we may conclude from its use in the cognate dialects. In Hebrew it is so rare a word that it is found but once besides in the whole of Scripture, in Prov. xiv. 3,—“In the mouth of fools is a rod of pride:” but in the other Semitic dialects it is of constant occurrence, as the staff, the *σκῆπτρον*, which the sheich, or elder, carries in his hand, and which, in old time, was ever the emblem of power. In the Peschito version the staff which Elisha gave his servant, as the mark that he had a prophetic mission entrusted to him, has this title<sup>c</sup>; and long

<sup>c</sup> 2 Kings iv. 29.

afterwards it was the name given to the crozier carried by the patriarchs and bishops in the Nestorian Church<sup>d</sup>. And, accordingly, the Chaldee paraphrast understands by it here the kingly office, and translates, "A *king* shall come forth from among the sons of Jesse, and Messiah shall grow up from among his sons' sons."

The root of the word is not found anywhere in Hebrew, and the derivation given by Gesenius<sup>e</sup> might seem to militate against this interpretation. But the philological views of Gesenius have been the subject of general animadversion among Oriental scholars in Germany; and in this, as in many other places, he has been shewn to have misunderstood the sources to which he went for information. For the Arabic word which he rightly gives as the root, is said by him to mean 'to bend,' 'be pliant;' really it means 'to be erect,' 'to be raised up.' But in most languages the words expressive of vegetable growth come from roots of this meaning. So in Hebrew, from אָלַץ, 'to ascend,' comes אֵלֶץ, 'foliage;' so in Latin, from *salio*, *saltus*; so in English, the spring is that season of the year when vegetation is most active. From the root, then, 'to be erect,' comes the Hebrew word for sapling, the robust young growth which men choose for their staves; and, again, from its toughness comes the second signification of the verb, 'to bend,' 'be pliant,' like a young shoot<sup>f</sup>.

And this rod, or staff, comes forth from a hewn-down

<sup>d</sup> Assem., *B. O.*, iii. pt. ii. 83. 7.  
 voce אָלַץ

<sup>e</sup> In his *Thesaurus*, *sub*

<sup>f</sup> Fürst, *Concord. Bibl.*, *sub voce*.

stem ;—for such is the signification of the word ; and, excepting the Septuagint version, its force is exactly preserved in the other Greek translations, which render it by *κορμός*, ‘a log of wood,’ from *κείρω*, ‘to cut down.’ It, also, is a word of rare occurrence, being found but twice elsewhere in Holy Scripture : first, in Job xiv. 8, where it is used of a stock or stem of a tree lying in the dust, which yet, at the scent of water, will bud and put forth boughs ; and, secondly, in Isaiah xl. 24,—“their stock shall not take root in the earth.” The passage in Job is in remarkable conformity with the etymological signification of the word ; for we are expressly told there that it is the trunk of a cut-down tree :—“There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground,” (really, ‘in the dust,’ *בְּצִפְפֹּר*) ; “yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away.” There is a plain antithesis between the felling of a tree and the cutting down of a man by death ; the man will never return to life, the tree may ; give it water, and both the roots which remain in the earth will send forth suckers, and the trunk lying in the dust will put forth buds, which, fed by its decay, may grow up into mighty trees.

So also, in Isaiah xl. 24, the Prophet is speaking of the certain destruction which shall overtake the rulers of the earth, whose trust is in idols ; and, in describing the hopelessness of their condition, he uses strong and

emphatic terms:—"Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth." Their state, that is to say, is beyond recovery: they are not young trees planted in the soil, which may take root there, and grow; they are felled logs, trunks hewn down, which, even if a man were to plant them, could not take root.

And here, also, the context requires that the word should retain its exact meaning. For in the latter half of the verse "the staff of Jesse" is described as a "sucker which, growing out of his roots shall bring forth fruit." Just, then, as in the passage already quoted from Job, the trunk and roots of the hewn-down tree are distinguished from one another, so is it here. When the destroyer has passed over both, and their glory is gone, the spring-time of a new and better hope visits them. To suppose the tree still standing, while the sucker brings forth fruit, is against reason. What value has the sucker while the tree remains? What possibility has it of growing while it is shaded, and the nourishment of the roots drawn away by the thick foliage and wide-spread branches of the parent stock? For the sucker to grow to maturity, and bring forth fruit, the old tree must be gone; it is by its decay alone that the new tree can find room for its development. And this is in accordance with the established rules of Hebrew parallelism: each sentence must present the same idea, but each must illustrate and define the other. The idea here is that of life springing out of death,

strength from weakness, vigour from decay. It is the upspringing of a plant out of a dry ground; the growth of a bough cut from the cedar; it is God accomplishing His purposes by means in themselves unequal to the task.

And the fact is in remarkable agreement with the prophecy. At the carrying away into Babylon the lineage of David lost their royal crown and dignity: in the future troubles of the nation no hearts turned to them for encouragement. The priests went back as the rulers of the rebuilt Jerusalem. When the Greek kings of Antioch wished to wring money from the Jews, it was the high-priesthood which they proposed each year to sell to the highest bidder: when Epiphanes wished to establish heathenism at Jerusalem, it was round the family of the old priest at Modin that the nation rallied; and the high-priesthood, with sovereign power, was the reward of the bravery of his sons. Meanwhile, the family of David became peasants and handicraftsmen: they were forgotten; no one thought of them; any pretensions on their part would have met only with ridicule. But the word of prophecy remained firm. It was written, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof:" and in the terms of Isaiah's prediction, From the hewn-down trunk of Jesse the Messiah shall come forth, and upon the ruins of his temporal dominion that spiritual kingdom shall be established which shall last for ever.

In agreement with this it must be noticed, that it is not David's name which is mentioned, but Jesse's:



a fact the more remarkable, inasmuch as twice where the prophecy is quoted in the New Testament David's name is substituted for that of his less glorious ancestor, and our Lord is called "the Root and Offspring of David<sup>s</sup>." But the use of Jesse's name exactly agrees with the whole purport of the prophecy. When a tree is cut down its glory departs; and so by the loss of the kingdom David's family returned to the civil condition which they held in Jesse's time. It is not from a family of rank and dignity that Messiah is born, but from one following the ordinary occupations of trade and agriculture; from one that, after having held a lofty station, has fallen back to its original meanness. The Bethlehem-Ephratah which once boasted that a race of monarchs had gone forth from her fields, has become again the least among the thousands of Judah, when from her decay the Scion springs forth who shall rule God's people Israel.

The phrase, moreover, suggests a parallel between David and our Lord. As nothing was apparently more improbable than that the son of the husbandman of Bethlehem would raise Israel from its state of abject weakness to the height of power and dominion, so equally unlikely was it that the son of a carpenter, born in the same town, and of the same lineage, would deliver mankind from their thralldom unto Satan, and admit them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But such, nevertheless, was the case. From Jesse, and from Bethlehem, two sceptres did arise,—the one of earthly power and tem-

poral sovereignty, in David; the other of divine and spiritual empire, in Christ.

Everything, in fact, combines to shew that Hezekiah cannot be the sceptre here described. For the same conclusion at which we have arrived by the consideration of the etymological meaning of the word rendered 'stem,' follows also from the comparison of the commencement of the eleventh chapter with the end of the tenth. For the Assyrian is there compared to a mighty tree, of which the Prophet says, "Behold, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, shall lop the bough with terror, and the tall growing trees shall be hewn down. . . . But there shall come forth a rod—a sceptre—from the hewn-down trunk of Jesse." Plainly, both royal lineages must fall: the axe which now hews down the haughty Sennacherib will, in its time, also level the house of David with the dust. But the one will perish; the other will yet again attain to sovereignty; for "of David's line shall one sit upon his throne." Or more fully, in the later words of Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, whose name shall be, Jehovah our Righteousness."

The prediction that "He shall prosper" is, in Isaiah's prophecy, contained in the last word, "shall bring forth fruit"—"a sucker out of his roots shall bring forth fruit." The Authorized Version indeed renders it "shall grow," but there is no proof of the word ever having this meaning; while the sense of bringing forth fruit is of frequent occurrence, and is

that required by its etymology. Moreover, the laws of Hebrew parallelism demand that the idea stated in the first member shall be rendered more definite and precise in the second. It does not permit a mere repetition: each portion must contribute something towards the accuracy and exactness of the thought. And so then here there is an advance in the second portion of the Prophet's words. In the first, "a rod springs forth from a hewn-down trunk;" in the second, we learn that no untimely fate awaits it: it grows unto perfection, and brings forth fruit. The "root out of a dry ground, with no form or comeliness, with no beauty that men should desire Him," is confessed as a "Prophet, mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people."

The same laws of parallelism forbid our adopting the opinion held by several of the Fathers, that the rod of Jesse was the Virgin Mary, while the Scion from his roots is our Lord. It was not indeed the prevalent view, but it was held by Justin, Jerome, Tertullian, Ambrose, and some others, and probably arose from the simple fact of there being two nouns, each of which they supposed must refer to a different person. So before there had been the Almah and the Immanuel; and in the prediction with which prophecy begins there was the woman and her seed. But in each member of a parallelism the thing spoken of is the same in both: it is twice presented to the view, each time with some distinguishing quality. The rod, then, and the sucker are the same; but we may also add, that titles similar to these are often

given to our Lord, but never to the Virgin. He is the Branch, (רֶמֶץ, Isa. iv. 2; Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12; Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15); the Root, (שֹׁרֵשׁ, Isa. xi. 10, liii. 2); the Sucker, (יִינֵק, Isa. liii. 2); and similarly here, the Rod and Scion, (רֹאשׁוֹן, גִּבְעוֹר). Nor is there in the passage itself any reason for supposing the Virgin to be meant; so that this interpretation has been generally abandoned in modern times.

This latter word, however, *natser*, 'scion,' must not be passed over without a more careful consideration. For there can be, I think, little doubt that it was present in St. Matthew's mind when he said, "And He came and dwelt at Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene<sup>h</sup>." It is a very old opinion; for Jerome upon this passage says, "The learned Jews consider that the quotation 'He shall be called a Nazarene,' is taken from this place." He himself rejects it, but for a reason so mistaken, that it is scarcely credible how a man of St. Jerome's judgment could have written it. For he confounds Nazarene with Nazarite; and adds, that Nazarite is spelt with a *z*, and Natser, Nazareth, with *ts*. His own words, therefore, disprove his conclusion; and yet he must have been well aware that *Ναζωραῖος* is the Greek for Nazarene, whereas the word for Nazarite in the Septuagint is *Ναζηραῖος* and *Ναζιραῖος*. St. Matthew's word occurs again in Acts xxiv. 5, where the Christians are called the sect *τῶν Ναζωραίων*, certainly not of Nazarites, but of Nazarenes. So far, moreover,

<sup>h</sup> Matt. ii. 23.

from our Lord being a Nazarite, He is actually contrasted with John the Baptist in this very particular.

A confusion, moreover, may be plainly traced in the minds of many of the commentators upon this quotation in St. Matthew’s Gospel, which also would be incredible, were it not for the general ignorance of Hebrew patiently endured by them, under the belief that a knowledge of Greek is sufficient to enable them to understand the idiom of men who habitually spoke and thought in another tongue. For because the word is rendered Branch in the Authorized Version, they conclude that it has some connection with the word so translated in Jeremiah and Zechariah, (נֶזֶר). It really has none. The word used by these prophets illustrates the general idea attached to the word Natzer, but it has not the most remote connexion with the question whether or not St. Matthew saw in this name given to our Lord a covert indication that His birthplace would be Nazareth.

Even more absurd is the idea that the passage means that our Lord should be despised. No man ought to allow himself to suppose that St. Matthew was capable of writing anything so unmeaning as that “our Lord went and dwelt at Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called one despised.” Why at Nazareth more than at any other town of Galilee? We know nothing whatsoever to the discredit of Nazareth: there is not a single word said against it in any book ever written that we know of up to the time when our Lord was brought up there. Its name rather leads us to the idea

that it was superior to most parts of Galilee ; for Jerome says that it signifies “ Flos Galilææ ;” and again, he calls it “ Urbs florida.” Nathanael’s question, “ Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ?” amounts to nothing more than that it was a small, out-of-the-way place. With the prophecies before him, that Messiah should be born of the line of David, and at Bethlehem, where David was, how utterly improbable must it have seemed that the Deliverer should come forth from a village far away amid the mountains of Zebulon.

On the other hand, the name of the place in Hebrew was not Nazareth, but Natser—the very word which St. Matthew uses. Nazareth is a Chaldee form : but that educated Jews even in St. Jerome’s days called the place Natser follows from his saying that the name of the village signified “ the Flower of Galilee ;” the rendering, I may add, of this passage by the Septuagint, *ἄνθος ἐκ τῆς ρίζης ἀναβήσεται*, ‘ a flower shall go up out of its root.’ But we are not left to inference ; we have positive proof : for in the Talmud our Lord is styled Ben Natser, a son, an inhabitant, of Nazareth. And again, in the very ancient Hebrew Lexicon, *Aruch*, we read among the significations of the word Natser that it means “ the accursed Nazarene.”

Even the form of the Greek adjective is owing to dialectic peculiarities. The fondness of the people in many districts of Palestine for the sound *o* made them substitute it for almost every other vowel. We are all familiar with the change of Nebuchadnezzar’s name into Nebuchodnosor, in the Apocrypha. Similarly,

the words used by our Lord, *Talitha cumi*, in regions more to the East were pronounced *Tolitho cum*. The name Tabitha in the Acts, is the feminine of Tobias in the Apocrypha; which is identical, by the way, with the name Zebi, or Hirsch, borne by so many of the Jews in Germany in the present day. So in Syriac, a Christian is called Notsroyo. In St. Matthew, the first *a* is still retained, but the *e* has given place to omega, — *Ναζωραῖος κληθήσεται*, ‘He shall *be*’—not He shall be called—‘a Nazarene.’

If it be objected that this is not the primary meaning of Isaiah’s prophecy, we answer, first, that the Evangelist probably only meant that there was an allusion to our Lord’s birthplace in the Prophet’s words; and the fact bears him out. In any way, it is a thing worthy of observation, that the title here given to the Messiah, in itself an uncommon word, was the actual name of the village where He was brought up. The ordinary word would have been *נָצְרַת*, which Isaiah does use a few chapters before, and which alone occurs in Jeremiah and Zechariah. Why does Isaiah here use another? And that one so suggestive of the inference which St. Matthew deduces from it? But, secondly, it is the manner of Scripture to appeal to these covert allusions. It claims that the Old Testament not only directly bears witness to Christ, and Christian doctrine, but that it is full of analogies which would escape an inattentive reader. I need refer only to one, to the use which St. Paul makes of the name of Hagar<sup>1</sup>. But for so great an

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 24.

authority, a modern commentator would hesitate in accepting Sarah's handmaid as a type of Mount Sinai, and of the law given thereon. But the New Testament is full of similar applications of narratives and sayings in the Old, to the doctrines of Christianity; so that St. Matthew does not stand alone, but, like the other teachers of the new covenant, claims the principle of this fulness of Scriptural interpretation.

Again, it is objected that St. Matthew does not refer to any one prophet, but to the prophets generally. But this may have been because the Evangelist was not quoting the exact words of Scripture, but only alluding to it; and he may have considered that all the words in which the Messiah is called a root, or rod, or branch, or sucker indirectly pointed to the same fact of our Lord being brought up at a place which bore this name. But I may add a significant fact. Many ancient testimonies affirm that St. Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew, whatever by Hebrew may there be meant. Now in every Oriental dialect the allusion would be plain; no one would doubt for a moment that St. Matthew referred to this passage in Isaiah; and it is found that the plural is of as rare occurrence in the Oriental versions, as the singular is in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. The Peschito, the Curetonian Syriac, the Harkleian Syriac, the Æthiopic, all read "by the prophet." Does not this suggest the idea, that the Greek scribes, not being able to understand the reference, not knowing what prophet was meant, changed the singular into the plural, as if the Evan-



gelist himself had had no definite meaning in his quotation?

From the person of the Messiah the Prophet proceeds to describe His kingdom. It does not belong to my subject to enter at any length upon this portion of the prophecy: enough to say, that the Spirit rests upon Him "without measure," and fills Him with every high and ennobling gift:—"The spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord." The Prophet does not intend here to enumerate all the qualities of our Lord, but confines himself to such as are required by a ruler. It is the Messiah as King, and not as Priest and Prophet, who is distinguished by these princely attributes; and, accordingly, the Prophet next describes His rule as one of impartial justice:—"With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove (or decide) with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked." And as the result of this just rule, He shall finally establish a universal empire of innocence and peace, in which "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; the calf also, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."

The beauty of the Prophet's imagery infinitely surpasses the corresponding passages in which the poets of Greece and Rome have described the happiness of the golden age; but it must be remembered that it is

imagery, and as such to be understood. The view of Hengstenberg and others, who imagine that the nature of the animal creation will be changed, and the world return to a primeval state of perfection, is so contrary to reason as to be scarcely worth refuting. And, besides, it depends upon two false hypotheses: the first false in fact, that the animals in the era of paradise did not prey upon one another; the second false in theory, that the animals preying upon one another was inconsistent with the declaration of God, that all His works were very good. There are, in the present day, men who imagine that it is a discovery of modern times that the death of the brute creation was independent of the fall of Adam: they think that we owe this truth to geology. But in this, as in much besides, modern times have done nothing more than reproduce, from a different quarter, old-fashioned truths. We owe to geology a proof of the extreme antiquity of death; and the value of this proof consists in its resting upon the evidence of facts: but the Fathers who had to meet the Manichæan heresy, and therefore were obliged to consider that most difficult of all subjects, the nature of evil, came to the same conclusion from reasonings, and proved that physical death was not an evil, was no defect in creation; and that Adam had seen death, and knew what it was in others, before God said to him that, if he broke the commandment, "dying, he should die." But to this subject I shall revert hereafter; and shall content myself now with saying that the old exposition of this passage, by such Fathers as Theodoret, is the best,—

“That by the tame and savage animals the Prophet describes the differing dispositions of men. For the wolf signifies a disposition given to rapine, while the lamb is gentle and mild; the leopard symbolizes cunning, while the kid is simple and guileless; the lion is pride, the bull boldness, while the calf is humble and timid. And accordingly we see,” he adds, “all ranks of men dwelling together in the Church; for emperors and prefects, generals and common soldiers, artizans, domestics, and even beggars, all share equally at the same sacred table, all hear the same words, and are washed in the same baptismal laver.”

A more complete fulfilment may be reserved for future times; but, as I have remarked before, the connection of the facts of a prophecy is not one of time, but of cause and effect. And in the death of Christ the prophecy was virtually fulfilled, because a motive was then revealed sufficiently powerful to subdue all the evil passions, and stubborn self-will, and perversity of men. The final destruction of evil requires only the complete establishment of Christian principles: at present they have but a very limited influence; an influence reaching to but a limited number of persons, and more or less partial in every one even of them. We believe that at some future time the influence of Christianity will be very much greater than it is now, and its extent universal: “For the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.” But even then, if the world is to be a state of probation, evil must be present, and be sufficiently prevalent and powerful to

make the trial of the Christian's faith a reality. If the world cease to be a state of probation, an order of things so entirely new will have been established, that even the wisest man can say nothing worthy of credit concerning it. Practically, we are concerned with things as they are at present; and we know that now Christ's kingdom is not universal. Catholic in theory, the Church ever has been a limited communion; limited in its geographical extent, and, what is far worse, limited in the very partial influence which Christianity has exerted over the mass of professing Christians. But this influence may be very greatly extended: heathen countries may be won for the Cross of Christ; at home much may be done to remove the ignorance, the immorality, and the many physical causes which now neutralize the efforts of the Christian minister. The relations between the large employers of labour and their work-people may be based upon something higher than mere commercial considerations; landlords may build dwellings for their labourers, in which health may be possible, and chastity, instead of removing them from their parishes. Even Christian nations may learn to regulate their actions by the law of justice, instead of the law of might. The possibility of all these, and many more such things, is contained in the death of Christ. The cause is there, though the effect be still delayed: but we hope that the effect will in due time come. And though we must still repeat St. Paul's words, that "the whole creation groaneth together, and travaileth together until now," yet may this misery, and

turbulence, and unrest, gradually be lessened, and instead of the ceaseless struggle, the never-ending toil, and the fierce passions of human life, there may be in it a content and peacefulness which shall prefigure the better rest of heaven.

In the case of many individuals it is even so now: many a man whose own heart has been the scene of the wild struggle of contending lusts, has so felt the power of Christ, that a deep peace and tranquil happiness have made his Saviour's words to him full of meaning, where He says, "The kingdom of God is within you." And probably these words contain a principle which ought never to be forgotten in the consideration of the prophecies concerning the establishment of the Messiah's universal empire of peace. Their best fulfilment is in the individual conscience, as men, one by one, yield themselves to Christ's spirit, and are formed after His likeness: and any general fulfilment is impossible, except by the multiplication of these individual cases. And in them it is a fulfilment gradually growing more complete in life, but perfected only when their probation is over, and they are called away to enter into the joy of their Lord.

I have but one more remark to offer; and that is, that granting that there will be a more adequate fulfilment of the prophecy in the establishment of a better era upon earth than exists at present, the terms of the prediction preclude us from believing that it will be immediate. For, first, Christianity is to be

commensurate with the whole world,—“The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” And, secondly, there is to be the second ingathering of the Jews. The first ingathering took place at the founding of Christianity; for the Jews everywhere were its first recipients, and the heathen converts gathered themselves round, and adopted the forms of the Jewish synagogue. The second ingathering,—“from Assyria and Egypt, and from Pathros and Cush and Elam; and from Shinar and Hamath, and from the isles of the sea,”—is that which St. Paul tells us is to happen after the fulness of the Gentiles has come in<sup>k</sup>; an ingathering into the Christian Church, and not a restoration to their own land, which would place them upon a different footing from their brethren, who did not harden themselves against the first preaching of the Gospel, and who therefore were everywhere merged into the Christian community.

We infer the probability of this great event not taking place until the last ages of the world from St. Paul<sup>1</sup> having connected this prophecy with the destruction of Antichrist. For when he says, “Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming,” he is quoting the fourth verse of this chapter of Isaiah. It was, in fact, from the Chaldee paraphrast that St. Paul took his application of the passage; for by the Wicked the Chaldee does not understand collectively all wicked

<sup>k</sup> Rom. xi. 25.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 8.

men, but the arch-enemy of the Jewish race, who in the latter days shall slay Messiah ben Joseph. His version is as follows:—"He shall smite the guilty upon the earth with the word of His mouth, and with the speech of His lips shall he cause to die the wicked Armillus,"—the waster of the people, *ἐρημόλαος*. How long the Church of Christ may yet wait for this event we know not, for with God a thousand years are but as one day; but it is evident that we are living now under that part of the prophecy which speaks of the root of Jesse as being set up as an ensign to the Gentiles; and our business therefore is to gather in the Gentiles by missionary enterprize, and so spread the boundaries of the Saviour's kingdom, and prepare for the day of greater things whenever God may be pleased to vouchsafe it. But above all, we should endeavour ourselves to have the kingdom of Christ established in our own hearts, that our conscience and our lusts being no more at variance, but the flesh subdued to the spirit, we may ourselves enjoy that peace and innocence of which the Prophet speaks, when all that is wild and fierce, and cunning and artful, and proud and violent in us may have its nature changed, and no longer resist those heavenly qualities which are the blessed fruits of the Spirit.

## SERMON IV.

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ISAIAH xl. 1.

*“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God.”*

THE last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah form a distinct prophecy, with several remarkable points of difference between it and the earlier series of his writings. In them some historical event had ever roused the Prophet to address words of warning and counsel to his countrymen; and upon collecting them into one book, he appended as a fitting conclusion the historical narratives of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, of Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, and of the embassy of the Babylonian king. In this, the last and greatest record of his inspired pen, we have one connected whole, occupied entirely with the events of future time, but divided by the occurrence of the same refrain into three equal portions: of which the first treats of the certain overthrow of heathenism by the one true God, the sign and trophy of which should be the deliverance of Israel from Babylon by the arms of Cyrus; in the second we have Israel's return homewards, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, to be the scene of the victory over sin and the deliverance of all mankind from spiritual bondage, wrought no longer by the arms of an earthly conqueror, but by the sufferings of Jehovah's servant;



while in the third we have the fruits of the victory in the founding of Christ's universal kingdom, the sanctions of which consist not in temporal promises, but in the gift of pardon,—whereby men have peace of conscience,—and the presence of the Spirit,—whereby they can lead a holy life. In its general aspect it is a message of consolation, both directly, and also in the contrast between the helpless idols of the heathen and the one true God. And if, as we believe, this is the last and final work of Isaiah's old age, never did nation stand more in need of comfort; for already that long series of disasters had commenced which ended in the Babylonian exile. Hitherto the Prophet had ever had some present solace to offer them. When Samaria and Damascus girt Jerusalem about with arms, he could foretell the speedy dissolution of the league, and that within a few years both nations should be broken. When Sennacherib was marching onwards, and his ambassadors mocking their weakness upon their very walls, he was commissioned to declare that the invader should shoot no arrow into the city, nor cast up a mound against it; for God would hew down the lofty tree with violence, and lay the high-growing trees in the dust. But in both cases it was but a temporary respite, and Isaiah was commanded himself to bear the evil tidings to Hezekiah, that the treasures of Jerusalem must be carried captive to Babylon, and its noblest youth serve there as menials. The piety of individual kings might delay the calamity, but the evil was too deeply set, the apostacy from God too general among the Jews, for escape to

be possible. Each year the hand of Assyria pressed more heavily upon them; and when Assyria fell, it was but to make way for a more powerful military empire. The last century of Jewish independence was a time of growing misery, with but temporary alleviations; ever increasing troops of marauders devastated more and more the country, and made agriculture almost cease; the population was thinned and led into captivity; the national independence overthrown, and their only chance of quiet was in becoming tributaries to a foreign power. It is indeed uncertain whether Isaiah lived to see Manasseh carried away captive into Babylon, but he certainly saw troubles thickening upon the land, and knew to what sure end all the presages of his time pointed. Therefore he spake by the Spirit these words of comfort, in which, in brief and general terms, he foretold the restoration of his countrymen from captivity, the rebuilding of their ruined cities and temple, and the establishment of a better covenant between them and God.

For the consolation offered them is chiefly spiritual. The temporal glories of the nation have passed away. Never again shall king sit on David's throne, clad in the same magnificence of earthly rule. The images of the Prophet are no longer drawn from regal grandeur: it is now a servant of whom he speaks;—coming in such obscurity, that none shall hear His voice in the streets; in such gentleness, that the bruised reed He will not break; with so little of earthly splendour and beauty, that none who see Him shall desire Him. It is “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;”

and yet in Him there is true comfort and solace for God's people: for the Prophet weaves around Him such a web of Christian mysteries, and truths, and doctrines, that well might Jerome of old say, that "no longer ought he to be called a prophet, but an evangelist; for so clearly does he set forth the mysteries of Christ and His Church, that he seems to be not so much foretelling the future, as narrating the history of the past."

It is to this latter portion of Isaiah's prophecies that Jerome's words belong; for it is now no longer Jerusalem and the temporal fortunes of the house of David which occupy the foremost place in the Prophet's mind, but, as though the world had closed behind him, his eye is fixed upon the distant future, and he sees there the sufferings of the Messiah and the establishment of His universal empire. Up to this time local circumstances had always been present to his view. Starting from political events, and generally from some impending calamity, he had raised the drooping spirits of the people by reminding them of the promise of a Saviour bound up with their national existence. But now the Prophet has reached the limit of the age ordinarily allotted to human life, and his eye is dim for the things of time: worn with years, he has withdrawn from the affairs of State, and is no longer, as of old, the trusted counsellor to whom, in all the trying emergencies of his time, the King looks for advice, for support, for consolation. The activity and the cares of life have both ceased; and whether we consider, as many do, that this final pro-

phcey was written in Manasseh's time<sup>a</sup>, and that the Prophet had lived to witness the overthrow of that picture of the Theocratic government which it had been the labour of his life to establish; or with others<sup>b</sup>, that Hezekiah was still alive, but that Shebna<sup>c</sup>, whose deposition from his office Isaiah prophesies, and the substitution of Eliakim in his place, was exercising over the pious but irresolute King an influence hostile to better things, and that therefore Isaiah no longer took part in the affairs of government,—however this may be, it is certain that he now takes a wider range, and in more spiritual terms describes the relations between the believing people of God, whether Jew or Gentile, and their Saviour.

This difference, however, between these two portions of Isaiah's prophecies has led many of the "higher critics" in modern times to dispute the authenticity of these last twenty-seven chapters, and to suppose that they were written at Babylon towards the close of the captivity. Now if this view were confined to such as deny the fact of prophecy, and argue that any clear prediction of an event must be taken as proof sufficient that that event had already happened, it would be superfluous to examine the question. Discussion is only possible where there is some common ground; and the question to be debated with those who hold this theory is, whether God did ever speak to men by the prophets in a manner distinct

<sup>a</sup> Kleinert, *De Authentia Orac. Jes.*, capp. xl.—lxvi., pp. 118—155.

<sup>b</sup> Hävernick, *Einl.*, ii. 151.

<sup>c</sup> Meier, *Gesch. der nat. Poet. Lit. der Hebräer*, p. 315.

from that in which He speaks to our hearts by natural religion and our own emotions; whether, in short, there be any such thing as revelation, and men have at any time spoken not of themselves, but as they were moved directly by the Holy Ghost. But the theory is not merely held by such as say that the occurrence, for instance, of the name of Cyrus is sufficient proof that these chapters were written after the capture of Babylon; it is adopted also by many who, though the habits of thought by which they are surrounded allow them to deal less reverently with Holy Scripture than is happily usual among us, yet have set themselves to the examination with full honesty of purpose, and hold it as a fairly probable deduction of internal criticism. At one time, indeed, it seemed likely to become the current view abroad; and the title of "the Babylonian Isaiah," or "the pseudo-Isaiah," still meets us commonly in their theological literature. And though many of the most able writers of Germany have combated the arguments upon which it rests, and conclusively demonstrated their unsoundness, still it is even now sufficiently prevalent, and so often paraded as one of the grandest discoveries of modern days, that it would be unsatisfactory to proceed to the consideration of the contents of these chapters without first stating some reasons which oblige me still to believe that the Book of Isaiah, as it at present stands, is not made up of the works of various authors, but is the genuine production of one and the same writer.

The controversy is, in fact, a reproduction, upon

theological ground, of the battle long so fiercely waged respecting the authorship of the noblest of the Grecian poems. But the contest is carried on under by no means equal circumstances. For Homer lived long before the age of written compositions; and we have historical proof of the collection of his rhapsodies having been the work of a time separated by many centuries from the period in which he flourished. His whole history, moreover, is involved in the greatest obscurity,—so that there was little of external evidence to stand in the way of the new theories. Isaiah, on the contrary, belonged to a class of men well versed in the arts of writing, and was himself the author of several histories besides his book of prophecies. There existed, moreover, a peculiar institution in the schools of the prophets, fitted to ensure the preservation of the works of their leading men. We find, too, subsequent prophets quoting or alluding to Isaiah's words; and in one of the Apocryphal books, but nevertheless a work of considerable authority, we find an enumeration of the contents of his prophecies, in which these later chapters are exactly described. We know, moreover, that at the return from Babylon the custody of the sacred books was entrusted to careful and competent hands, and that one of the chief labours of the Great Synagogue consisted in the formation of the sacred canon, which, in its threefold division of the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, was read on all solemn occasions, and in course of time every sabbath-day in their synagogues. We know that the influence of the prophetic writings was such as entirely to change the character

of the people, and that this change commenced during the Babylonian exile. The external evidence, therefore, for the genuineness of Isaiah's writings is very strong, and could be overcome only by internal evidence of the most convincing kind.

The imitative character, however, of the human mind made it certain that the Homeric controversy would have its counterpart on holy ground, and certainly in one respect no book of Scripture could so justly claim the right of being the object of this attack as Isaiah's prophecies. For in them Hebrew literature reached its highest excellence: so that had we no personal interest in the Prophet's words, even did they not speak to us of our highest hopes, they would still demand our attention from the beauty of the language and the grandeur of the thoughts; to say nothing of the influence which they exercised upon the minds of the people, whom they entirely weaned from idolatry, and filled with an ardent longing for the day of their deliverer's approach.

To believe in two Isaiahs springing from the same people in so short a period of time, requires, to say the least, no ordinary amount of credulity. But when we find that their genius takes so entirely the same direction; that they are both so equally imbued with the same theocratic maxims of government; that both have for their centre so completely the same one thought; that both alike dwell upon the same images, use the same words, and attain to the same perfectness of language; that the beauties of style in both, or, if you will, the defects, are the same, the same love of

antithesis, the same fondness for paronomasia, and playing upon words; above all, that the second, the imitator, is so thoroughly the summing up and perfection of the first, and superior, if possible, to him in beauty<sup>d</sup>,—to believe this requires more than credulity; it is a thing absolutely incredible,—even more so than that there could have been a race of Homers, each offering his patchwork contribution, but all combining in one harmonious and consistent whole.

Had these prophecies been written at the close of the Babylonian exile, how could the author have escaped that debasing influence upon the national literature which everywhere else we see so strongly exercised. Already the later prophecies of Jeremiah are full of Chaldeeisms; in Ezekiel the whole purity of the tongue is gone: and when the people returned to Jerusalem, we know that they could not even understand the language of their ancient poets and seers. Was it likely that at such a time, one who intended his words for the present consolation of his countrymen, would write them in a language which required an interpreter, and with no trace of the idioms in daily use around him? It is true, that some of the later Psalms composed at Babylon are written in a style of the utmost beauty; but even in them Chaldee words and modes of spelling are by no means rare. But even were their language as pure as that of the Davidic age, we must remember that the faculty of poetic imitation is comparatively a common one. Nor,

<sup>d</sup> Gesenius, *Einleitung*, p. 17.



again, is it surprising that the prophets who wrote after the return to Jerusalem, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, should have imitated, with a certain degree of success, their predecessors in ancient days, and written more purely than the prophets during the captivity. For naturally, with their restoration to their country the national literature revived also ; and every feeling of patriotism prompted them to produce, to the utmost of their ability, all that was glorious in their nation previously to the exile, and especially the language of their sacred books. But that the second Isaiah, surrounded from his birth with the strange medley of words and phrases which was spoken at Babylon, should have escaped its influence, and been able to write with ease and freedom in a dialect, not merely peculiar to Jerusalem, but in its purity confined there to men of the highest caste, is a thing which exceeds belief. His position is too independent, his genius too great, his preoccupation with one engrossing thought too entire, for him to have trammelled himself with the difficulties of imitation. Men imitate who are clever, but not great. When the thought is valueless, they study the manner of saying it. There is no trace in the later Isaiah of such mental weakness : and even if he had stooped to imitate, numerous indications must certainly have remained of the strain to which he had subjected his genius, and have proved beyond doubt the falseness of his claims.

We must not, however, imagine that the theologians of the "higher criticism" have any unanimity among

themselves in their views, or that they content themselves with rejecting the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah's prophecies. On the contrary, each applies in his own way the same disintegrating process, until, to use the words of one of them<sup>e</sup>, the name of Isaiah serves only to grace a prophetic anthology, consisting mostly of but fugitive pieces, with but three compositions among them of any length, and of these but one really written by Isaiah, while the rest are the contributions of nameless and forgotten authors. The genuine writings of Isaiah, says another<sup>f</sup>, did not fill one roll of parchment; while to compensate for this, some of the more recent critics<sup>g</sup>, pressed by the argument that the state of things referred to incidentally in the last twenty-seven chapters was not that which existed during the Babylonian exile, but that of the later years of Hezekiah's reign, have generously restored to the true Isaiah all those passages which stood in the way of their theory; and lastly, not to multiply unnecessarily these instances, Ewald<sup>h</sup> labours ingeniously to prove that not Babylon but Egypt was the country in which these prophecies were written, grounding his theory upon the facts that Egypt and Ethiopia are frequently spoken of with interest; that allusions are made to their customs; and that the people of Pelusium are mentioned under their local name of Sinim.

<sup>e</sup> Meier, *Geschichte der Poet. nat. Lit. der Hebräer*, p. 318.

<sup>f</sup> Eichhorn, *Hebr. Proph.*, iv. 120.

<sup>g</sup> Augusti, *Einl.*, § 206; Ewald, *Die Proph. des alt. Bund.*, ii. 460.

<sup>h</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 409.

One thing we must indeed grant, that if the last twenty-seven chapters are not genuine, their impugnors are at least consistent in rejecting much also in the earlier portion of Isaiah's writings. Certainly the thirteenth chapter, and the first twenty-three verses of the fourteenth, are open to exactly the same attack. The Prophet's point of view, as Gesenius and Hitzig argue, belongs to the very end of the Babylonian exile, when the Medes were already upon their march. The enemy of Judæa in Isaiah's time was Nineveh; and Babylon, a subject state, just struggling into independence, was earnestly seeking the alliance of Hezekiah to strengthen its own dangerous position. What could the Prophet, they ask, know of the Medes, a people who attained to independence only one year (B.C. 714) before the date usually assigned to this prophecy, and who had given little promise of any such warlike qualities as to justify the expectation that they would ever be a match for Assyria? The Arabians, in like manner, are mentioned by no writer until long after Hezekiah's time. These arguments are quite as strong as any adduced against the authenticity of Isaiah's final prophecy, and if inspiration be denied, it is utterly inconceivable that he should thus have predicted events so unlikely, so uncalled for by the state of things in his days, and yet so minutely fulfilled.

But grant inspiration, and the whole objection disappears. The point of view in one moved by the Holy Ghost is not the actual present, but the state of things into which he is removed. He is not indeed

carried entirely out of his own time, but distant events are impressed upon his mind, and become the groundwork of his predictions. So here, the present time is not absolutely put away, for there is much to connect the prophecy with the date usually assigned to it. In the first place, it was during Isaiah's days that the Assyrians transplanted the Chaldæans from the deserts to dwell in cities, intending to use them for their own protection against the native inhabitants of Babylon. The policy did not prove successful, although the Chaldees always remained distinct from the Babylonians; and possibly Isaiah saw in it a confession of weakness on the part of the Ninevite kings. At all events, he notices it in his prophecy against Tyre, and couples with it there the unexpected, yet most true prediction, that these transplanted nomad tribes would be the conquerors of Tyre:—"Behold the land of the Chaldæans! this people was not till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof: and he brought it to ruin:"—the Chaldee land brought Tyre to ruin.

It is true that the Medes attained to independence under Deioces in Isaiah's time; but a century before they had been a powerful people, and actually helped in overthrowing Nineveh; and as Shalmaneser had planted captive Israelites in Media, there is no difficulty in supposing that their growing power was well known at Jerusalem. The rapid manner in which political events are transmitted from mouth to mouth in countries without regular means of convey-

ing news, is too well known to surprise us. As for the Arabs, whether the word signifies 'inhabitant of the desert,' or 'inhabitant of the west,' there is no reason for supposing the appellation unknown to Isaiah; possibly events then may have brought these unchanging desert races into temporary notoriety; for Herodotus describes Sennacherib as king of the Arabians and Assyrians<sup>1</sup>; and Jehoram and Uzziah had both carried on wars with them. The important fact is that Isaiah did foretell that Judæa should be punished; but not by Assyria, the only dangerous enemy in his days, but by Babylon, where the Assyrians had placed an alien race to check the native inhabitants; but these, fresh from their tents, with their vigour untamed by city life, were just establishing their independence, and seeking the friendship and alliance of Judæa. Yet he denounces them as the tyrants and oppressors of his country, and predicts their overthrow by the Medes, a race even then partly subject to Assyria, and partly free, but whom one able man was transforming from a number of distinct and turbulent tribes into a powerful monarchy. Events were happening to call Isaiah's attention to these countries, but no human foresight could have guessed the great results which were to happen from these remote events. Yet Isaiah was not the only prophet who knew of them: Micah, his contemporary, in a chapter, several verses of which apparently are quoted from Isaiah, was equally well aware that Babylon was the place where the Jews would be carried captive<sup>k</sup>. And

<sup>1</sup> Herod. ii. 141.

<sup>k</sup> Micah iv. 10.

as Jeremiah in his fiftieth chapter has quoted and imitated Isaiah's words, the prophecy must have been older than his times, and consequently the predictions in it—one of which, as we know, Isaiah publicly declared to Hezekiah upon the visit of Merodach-Baladan's ambassadors—are inexplicable, if inspiration be denied.

This prophecy, therefore, is no source of weakness to the argument respecting the last twenty-seven chapters of the book. On the contrary, even this cursory glance at it may serve to shew that the "higher critics" encounter very serious difficulties in their attempt to assign it to an unknown pen, in direct contradiction to its title, which says that it was written by "Isaiah the son of Amoz." We may return, therefore, to our main subject, and consider next the argument which they endeavour to deduce from a certain difference of style compared with the earlier prophecies.

It must be granted, then, that in these later chapters there is a difference of style, but we must clearly understand in what it consists. For it is just such a difference as would arise from their being written at a later period of the Prophet's life, and upon a more indefinite subject. It is not inconsistent even with the existence of very considerable similarities of style, as Gesenius himself grants<sup>1</sup>; and in fact the points of resemblance are more real and important, than the contrary. For the difference consists in their being written in a broader and more even and more flowing

<sup>1</sup> *Einl.*, p. 16.

current of thought: there are no longer the sharp turns, the sudden contrasts, the abrupt transitions of Isaiah's earlier writings. There is less haste, less vehemence, greater fulness, longer dwelling upon the same idea. But this is exactly what we should expect in the writings of an old man, whose years of activity were passed. So, too, of the subject: always before there was a local event, which gave rise to the prophecy; there was also an immediate purpose to be effected. They were words spoken in times of emergency, when the Prophet's own mind was stirred and agitated, and when he wished to influence and sway the minds of both king and people, and make them adopt a definite course of policy. But in this final prophecy, all this admixture of temporary motives and feelings is swept away. There are, indeed, from time to time allusions to the state of things in Hezekiah's reign, and to the deepening troubles of the realm. But those troubles were not destined to be of short duration. They must go on until Jerusalem was in captivity, and the temple in ashes. The consolation, therefore, is given in general terms, such as would support the people under present trials by the prospect of a happiness yet to come, but they are not encouraged to look for any immediate deliverance. It is not themselves, but their Church and nation, which shall once again emerge from among the troubled waters. Even the prophecy of their restoration by Cyrus is couched in enigmatical language, and more to illustrate the certain victory of the one God over polytheism than as a merely Jewish

occurrence. When Sennacherib fell, it was for the sake of Jerusalem: but henceforward it is only as they represent true religion that the Jews possess God's favour. As it triumphs or is oppressed, so their fortunes rise or fall. And beyond is the Messiah's kingdom, in which Jew and Gentile share on equal terms. And here perhaps is the most remarkable point of difference. For in describing the national Deliverer, the Prophet no longer dwells upon His more glorious attributes. He no longer pours a golden age of happiness and prosperity; all the hopes of his nation he crushes with ruthless hand. It is not a conqueror, surrounded by the pomp of war; it is the servant of Jehovah whose humiliation he reveals, and that He shall save His people by bearing in His own person their guilt and punishment. And naturally, his style adapts itself to his subject. He was revealing the inmost mysteries of redemption, and consequently his manner is subdued and tranquil.

There is therefore no antecedent improbability in the view that our present book of Isaiah contains the genuine works of one and the same author. Remove that great stumbling-block of the "higher criticism," the fact of prediction, and everything is in favour of its authenticity. But if a prediction verified proves that it was written after the event, we cannot stop at the rejection of these twenty-seven chapters. The conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, of Tyre by the Chaldæans, of Babylon by the Medes, are quite as startling predictions as the summoning of



Cyrus by name to restore the Jews. We must reject them also, and with them the Prophet Micah, and, in fact, all the prophets. The supernatural element is too closely bound up with the whole of the Bible for us to be able to eliminate it. If one part falls because it is beyond nature, all falls with it.

Besides these general considerations there are also special arguments, derived partly from external, and partly from internal criticism, which claim an impartial examination.

I have already alluded to the important testimony of the son of Sirach, who in his list of Jewish worthies says of Hezekiah, "that in his days Isaiah saw by an excellent spirit what should come to pass at the last, and he comforted them that mourned in Sion<sup>m</sup>." As these latter words plainly refer to the last twenty-seven chapters, we thus learn that the Jews, two hundred years and more before our Lord's birth, regarded the oneness of the authorship as an undisputed fact.

The falsification must therefore have taken place so long before as for all traces of it to have disappeared. But we find proofs of the existence of this very portion of the book beginning with contemporary times. Nahum quotes it<sup>n</sup>; Habakkuk copies from it his description of the unprofitableness of idol worship<sup>o</sup>; Zephaniah his description of the desolation of Nineveh<sup>p</sup>; Jeremiah in no less than six places seems to

<sup>m</sup> Ecclus. xlvi. 24.      <sup>n</sup> Nahum i. 15, Isa. lii. 7; Nahum iii. 7, Isa. li. 19.      <sup>o</sup> Hab. ii. 18, 19, Isa. xli. 9, 10.      <sup>p</sup> Zeph. ii. 15, Isa. xlvii. 8.

have had these last chapters of Isaiah before his mind<sup>a</sup>: there are traces even in Ezekiel of a similar knowledge<sup>r</sup>. Now these passages are just such as would have been the natural result of these twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah being well known to the other prophets; and there are instances of the same kind proving their familiarity with the earlier portion. Probably in the schools of the prophets the works of their most famous seers were the object of continual study, till their minds became imbued with them, and almost unintentionally they reproduced the thoughts of those who had gone before. We may justly, moreover, attribute to these chapters the great change in the national feeling towards idolatry which so marks the people after their return from exile, and which, as it took place during their abode at Babylon, must have been based upon some work of admitted authority. We can therefore suggest no period when the writings of the false Isaiah could have been assigned to the true. There never was such ignorance or such indifference regarding the prophets as would have made such a confusion possible, and however ingenious may be the arguments of these critics, who think they can select by subjective evidence what was written by the one and what by the other, they are met on every side by unanswerable difficulties.

Another external testimony of importance is found in the edict of Cyrus, in which he says, "The Lord

<sup>a</sup> Jer. v. 25, Isa. lix. 2; Jer. xii. 1, Isa. lvii. 1; Jer. xii. 9, Isa. lvi. 9; Jer. xiii. 16, Isa. lix. 9; Jer. xiv. 7, Isa. lix. 12; Jer. xlviii. 18, Isa. xlvi. 1.      <sup>r</sup> Ezek. xxiii. 40, 41, Isa. lvii. 7—9.

God of heaven hath charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.” In these words, as Josephus informs us<sup>t</sup>, he was referring to Isaiah’s prediction, “That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.” Now, if this prediction had been uttered by a prophet living at the end of the captivity, it could scarcely have had any weight in influencing that monarch’s decisions: for what so natural as that an oppressed people, living in exile in an enemy’s land, should turn with hope to those with whom their oppressors were at war, and give utterance to the expectation that they would restore them to their country? The prophecy must have had the weight of time to give it political importance. It must already have been of admitted and notorious authority among the exiles themselves before it could have commanded the obedience of a stranger. It probably even had contributed to the success of his arms; and the devotion of the Jews to his cause, consequent upon their knowledge of his mission, may have been the reason which made him so evidently regard them with favour.

But it is this very mention of Cyrus, we are told, which forms the great argument against the authenticity of these chapters. It certainly shews that if not authentic, the prophecy is a forgery; for the writer assumes that he is foretelling an event of distant times, and makes it the very proof of the supe-

<sup>s</sup> Ezra i. 2.

<sup>t</sup> Antiq., xi. 1.

riority of the true God to idols that He could thus predict things future. It is no accident, therefore, that the Jerusalem Isaiah and the Babylonian Isaiah became confused by the carelessness of later times; for in spite of his genius and mental gifts, the latter falsely assumed the character of the former, and stands convicted of a manifest fraud. But the proof is insufficient to prove the charge. For, first, we have a similar prophecy in the case of Josiah foretold by name as the destroyer of Jeroboam's altar, and possibly with an allusion to the meaning of his name *Jehovah shall found*; whereas Jeroboam could found nothing: God's works alone remain sure. And, secondly, there is in the prophecy nothing more explicit than in the predictions referred to above,—that Babylon was the destined place of Judæa's exile, that the Medes would destroy Babylon, &c. There is nothing definite in Cyrus but the name. He sweeps before us as the ideal of a great conqueror summoned from the East, before whom the gates of brass and bars of iron are broken asunder. He does not appear, as in the writings of his contemporaries, as Cyrus the Persian. The name itself is an appellative, and signifies the Sun-king. And as many of the Eastern dynasties regarded themselves as descended from the sun, and the Persian monarchs bore the name generally, it must have been well known to Isaiah; for the expeditions of the Assyrian kings, and their constant deportation of races, had greatly increased the general knowledge of those times, especially as regarded Central Asia. There were Medes and Persians even in Sennacherib's army, and from

this time more than one Persian word occurs in the prophetic writings. The proper name of Cyrus, we are told, was Agradates; and the "remarkable accident," as one of these critics calls it<sup>u</sup>, or, as we call it, the miracle, the act of an overruling Providence, is, that the appellative should have become the proper name of the particular Persian king who fulfilled the prophecy. As, however, he is seen by the prophetic gaze, there is nothing of that exact knowledge which would have been natural in the days of the exile. The Prophet knows the name of Cyrus, and no more. All is indistinct and general. It is much the same as his knowledge of the Medes and Persians in the thirteenth and twenty-first chapters. And this, we must remember, is the law of prophecy, that God did not give the prophets knowledge beyond their own times. They were commissioned to declare certain events, but they were not removed from the general state of idea and thought current in their own days. And so here, if any one would compare Isaiah's account of Central Asia with that of Ezekiel, he would find that the knowledge of each is in proportion to his own times. It is, then, some mighty hero from the East, "from the rising of the sun," that sun whose name he bore, whose path of victory Isaiah traces in wonderful accordance with the event, but still in riddles which the event must solve. But when they were solved, and the method of the capture of Babylon gave an unexpected meaning to what before seemed but beautiful imagery,—“that saith to the deep, Be

<sup>u</sup> Hitzig, p. 468.

dry; and I will dry up thy rivers," "to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut,"—it is no wonder that the monarch felt that the prophecy was divine, and willingly obeyed the command "to rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem, and to lay again the foundations of the temple."

But let us next proceed to some points of internal criticism. And first we may notice that the Prophet always describes himself as being "the first to declare these things;" as telling things new, unheard before. But how could this be true of one who followed, instead of preceding, the more definite predictions of Jeremiah? How too could he, when mentioning Cyrus by name, speak of it as a thing so marvellous, if already he were threatening Babylon with his arms? He appeals, moreover, to the result of his former prophecies,—“Behold the former things have come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.” What more natural if he were referring to Sennacherib’s overthrow? But how under the exile could he describe the impending fall of Babylon as a thing which had not yet sprung forth? of which, that is to say, there were no indications? For the growing strength of Media and Persia was plain: already Nineveh, the old capital of the empire, had fallen before them, — and therefore the great care with which Nebuchadnezzar had fortified Babylon. Surely one whose sympathies lay with these revolted states could not describe their final success as a thing of which there were as yet no appearances.

In fact, so evident is it that no one could thus speak who lived under the exile, that one of the ablest of these critics\* acknowledges, "that no other explanation of this difficulty appears to him possible except the supposition that the writer assumed the character of an ancient seer:" "Vix alia se offert ratio, nisi ut statuamus, induisse scriptorem, qui sub finem exilii Babylonici vixerit, vatis alicujus veteris personam."

Again, if the indications of the *time* when the Prophet lived are thus certain, equally so are those of *place*. It is true that the land is in a desolate condition, but Zion is still the centre of the Prophet's thoughts; it is still inhabited<sup>†</sup>, and the walls of Jerusalem still stand<sup>‡</sup>. Now that the land was reduced to an extreme state of desolation in Hezekiah's time admits of easy proof. Though Jerusalem itself escaped from destruction, yet the armies of Sennacherib evidently overran every part of the country, and the taunt of Rabshakeh was probably but little exaggerated, that the King could scarcely have found riders for two thousand horses. What can surpass the description of these ravages given by the Prophet in a chapter the authenticity of which is unchallenged? "Your country is desolate, your cities burnt with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers." So extreme is the ruin, that "except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as completely overthrown as Sodom; as utterly annihilated as Gomorrah." Nor did Judæa ever recover

\* Rosenmüller, iii. 5, 6.

† Isa. lxi. 3.

‡ Ibid. lxii. 6.

its prosperity; for even after the short respite of Josiah's reign, Pharaoh Nechoh could exact of his son only one talent of gold and a hundred talents of silver: and to raise this very small sum "Jehoiakim taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh Nechoh." Nothing but the most extreme exhaustion can account for the evident difficulty in raising so slight an amount. In the earlier days of Hezekiah, the tribute he had paid with apparent ease was six times as much, being thirty talents of gold and three hundred talents of silver. Menahem had paid Pul a thousand talents of silver merely to obtain his consent to his assuming the royal name. We must conclude therefore that all trade had disappeared, and that the people, gaining a precarious subsistence from their fields, were absolutely destitute of money; there was no trade, no buying and selling, and therefore no coin; and consequently they were unable to meet the slightest taxation.

It is remarkable how rapidly these troubles are passed over in the Book of Kings. It does not even mention the various expeditions of the Assyrians against Palestine in Manasseh's time, in one of which that monarch was taken prisoner, when hiding among the thorns outside Jerusalem, and carried captive to Babylon, where apparently he spent the chief part of his life in confinement. Jerusalem was indeed but "as a booth in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged



city;" and it needed only some decided action on the part of the Assyrian king to capture it, in spite of the strength of its fortifications and natural position: though these were enough to give it a temporary security as long as Egypt was the main object of the Assyrian attack, or its captains sought nothing more than plunder for their followers. We have even Isaiah's own testimony that the armies of Sennacherib overran the land for two whole years at their pleasure, before the destroying angel smote them with pestilence:—"For this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and in the second year that which springeth of the same: and in the third year sow ye and reap." It follows, therefore, that for two whole years after Isaiah had prophesied Sennacherib's final overthrow, without speaking of the previous campaigns, the Assyrians so completely occupied the land, that all cultivation on the part of the inhabitants was impossible; and of the preceding year we have the short but decisive testimony of the Book of Kings, that "in the fourteenth year of the reign of Hezekiah, Sennacherib came up against *all* the fenced cities of Judah, and took them."

The picture, therefore, of desolation, and of the ruined cities of Judæa, drawn in these last chapters of Isaiah, is not unsuited to Hezekiah's time; for even the destruction of Sennacherib gave them but a temporary respite, and neither restored the past ravages of the country, nor gave the people any defence against future incursions. Under Manasseh these became so frequent that even the neighbourhood of Jerusalem

was a waste. But though in extreme misery, yet Zion must still have existed, when Isaiah wrote, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem<sup>a</sup>;" "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God<sup>b</sup>!"

But while the Prophet describes the desolation of the land, he is not historically acquainted with the captivity at Babylon; for summing up the troubles of Judah, he says, "My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause." He thus regards the captivity in Egypt, and the ravages of the Assyrian marauders, as the two greatest calamities which had ever yet happened to the Jews. But though without doubt in each incursion of the Assyrians numerous captives were carried away,—for human beings were the most valuable spoil of ancient war,—yet Isaiah was not aware of any general deportation of the people to Babylon, and consequently could not thus have written at the close of the Babylonian exile.

Moreover, when Isaiah speaks of Chaldea as the ends of the earth<sup>c</sup>, it is incredible that he could at the very time have been living there himself. His constant reference also to Egypt, his account of its prosperity, how "the labour of Egypt, and the merchandise of Æthiopia and of the Sabeans, men of stature," shall be brought to Jerusalem, as its mart<sup>d</sup>;

<sup>a</sup> Isa. xl. 2.  
lxii. 1, &c.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. xl. 9; add xli. 27, xlvi. 13, li. 17—23,  
<sup>c</sup> Ibid. xli. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid. xlv. 14.

his selection of these nations especially, as Judah's ransom<sup>e</sup>, even his choice of many single words, as, for instance, where he speaks of *sending* to Babylon<sup>f</sup>,—slight as are these indications in themselves, yet they all combine in leading to the conclusion that Jerusalem, and not Babylon, was the place where the Prophet wrote.

The next argument drawn from the condition of the people is even more cogent, and its force has been acknowledged by the remarkable fact that it has compelled the assailants of the prophecy to the extreme supposition, already alluded to, that there are fragments and remains of true prophecies embedded in these chapters, written, they say, certainly before the exile, and possibly by the true Isaiah. For what is their condition? They are given up to idolatry. Those who are impoverished "choose a tree that will not rot, and out of it they carve an image;" their richer men "lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god."—"They remain among the graves, they lodge in the monuments." How could they have practised this in the alluvial plains of Babylon? These rock-hewn tombs, so common in Palestine, so peculiar to a mountainous country, were alike unknown and impossible there.—"They eat swine's flesh:" but this was an Egyptian, and not a Babylonian practice, and is one of the passages upon which Ewald depends for proving that Egypt was the place where the prophecy

<sup>e</sup> Isa. xliii. 3.

<sup>f</sup> Ibid. xliii. 14.

was written.—They have “gardens also in which they sanctify and purify themselves; they inflame themselves with idols under every green tree, and slay their children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks:” and the right punctuation of a word, without meaning as it is at present read, refers to the unholy rites which Manasseh certainly practised; “For thou wentest,” says the Prophet, “unto MOLOCH with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes.”

Now we know that the immediate result of the Babylonian captivity was the abolition of idolatry; and that the horror of the people at these past human sacrifices was so great that the valley of Hinnom became the name for the place of eternal torment. How then could one who wrote at the end of the captivity speak of them as still slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks? Where could they even find these valleys in the vast plains of Babylonia? where the cliffs of the rocks in a country where stone is unknown?—“Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion.” But where among the sluggish canals of Babylon will these commentators find a stream rapid enough to wear the stones in its muddy bed smooth? Besides, it is not a stream; for both here, and above, where our version has ‘valleys,’ the word signifies a *nullah*—the bed of a mountain torrent, a *φάραγξ* as the Septuagint renders it, dry in the summer, but during the winter rains rushing along as a violent flood. In the warm summer months these torrent-beds were places of pleasant resort; and in such a one, in the

valley of Hinnom, the wretched people of Jerusalem offered their children unto Moloch.

There are various other arguments also, all tending to the same conclusion, but they are such as require an examination into words and phrases, and modes of thought and expression too exact and tedious for anything except the patient minuteness of a commentary. I will only say, that the number of remarkable words and phrases, and ideas and metaphors common to the two parts of Isaiah, and of rare occurrence, or which absolutely do not occur elsewhere, is almost past belief. But, omitting these, I shall content myself with one more argument drawn from the manner of prophesying. Now had these chapters been of so late date as is affirmed, there would, I think, have been found in them more definite allusions to the state of things then existing, and a more exact adaptation to the wants of the exiles, than we can at present discover. It was this knowledge of their actual circumstances which made Jeremiah the chief consolation, the especial prophet, of the captivity, while Isaiah is for all times. Even the Babylonian exile is treated by him more as a subsidiary point than as the main subject; and the deliverance from it passes on so completely into the establishment of Christ's kingdom, that at a certain stage the Prophet loses it altogether from his view. And how unnatural are his predictions! How entirely are they such as flesh and blood could not have revealed unto him! In a word, how truly they are *spiritual*! What eye not inspired could so have seen the humiliation of the pro-

mised Messiah? What human mind would have ventured to describe their national hero as giving His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair? As being more marred in visage than any man, and His form more than the sons of men? As one stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted?

Both matter, then, and manner equally point to the Isaiah of Hezekiah's time as the author of these chapters; and so really does the language. For though the style is softer and gentler, it is still the same. There is the same fondness for alliteration, carried to an extent which modern rules of writing would forbid. There is the same repetition of a word in both parts of a parallelism, constantly avoided in the Authorized Version by the substitution for one of them of a synonym, because I suppose it was thought that the occurrence twice of the same sound would offend modern ears. There are the same powerful and striking metaphors, as that of unveiling being used for degradation; the same absence of symbolic actions, so common with the other prophets; the same infrequency of visions, the same constant use of hymns of praise. In both parts alike the prophecies are delivered with no introduction, no declaration of "Thus saith the Lord," as in Jeremiah and the rest. In both alike the special name of God is "the Holy One of Israel," a title which occurs besides only five times in the whole of Scripture; thrice in the Psalms,—but of these psalms, one is generally ascribed to Isaiah's pen,—once in Ezekiel, and once in Jeremiah, but in

the fifty-first chapter, which in many remarkable particulars leans upon and imitates Isaiah's prophecies<sup>s</sup>. Lastly, in both parts alike there is the use of a phrase almost peculiar to Isaiah, though common in the New Testament, of being called something in the sense of being it:—"Thou shalt be called," that is, thou shalt be "the city of righteousness;" "Mine house shall be called," that is, shall be "a house of prayer for all people."

From these, therefore, and similar arguments, I conclude that we have in the last chapters the genuine prophecies of that same Isaiah who flourished in Hezekiah's reign, and who spake of the birth of the Child whose name is Wonderful, and of the Sceptre who should spring from the hewn-down stem of Jesse. Apparently they were written by him in his later years, when, purified and ennobled by a life of activity in God's service, he had withdrawn from active cares, and fixed his whole soul in meditation upon the coming of that Messiah towards whose advent he had so often guided the thoughts of his countrymen. Behind him was the memory of a life of unceasing endeavours to implant in the minds of both King and people a knowledge of the true God, and of the method of His righteous government upon earth; but around him lay the ruin of his hopes. The land daily grew more desolate; ever-increasing troops of marauders destroyed the labours of the husbandman; if he tilled any remote field, strangers searched it out, and devoured it in his presence: and the people, in their

<sup>s</sup> Jahn, *Einl.*, ii. 463.

distress, sought for comfort in human sacrifices and oblations to devils. The piety of Hezekiah and the warnings of Isaiah evidently had produced but little effect on the minds of either princes or people : and probably Manasseh did but bend to a general and long-established feeling when he offered his son to Moloch, and so rendered the apostacy of the nation complete. Meanwhile, the inevitable day of punishment drew nearer and nearer, and the Prophet clearly foresaw the time when "the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab would be stretched over Jerusalem, and the wrath of God would wipe it, as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down."

But though the general state of things was thus hopeless, there were yet numerous individuals who served the Lord : and for them Isaiah had words of comfort. He had indeed no present hope to suggest ; no immediate deliverance was possible : but he could tell them that the destruction of Jerusalem would not be final, that it would yet rise again from its ruins ; for that from the east a great hero should come, who would overthrow their oppressors, restore the exiles to their home, rebuild their city, and lay again the foundations of their temple. But beyond this lay their real and true solace. For it was sin which had caused their misery, as it is the ultimate cause of all misery ; and for that a remedy is provided, not after the manner which any human mind would have suggested, but in God's own way, by One who should be "wounded for their transgressions, and bruised



for their iniquities ; and on whom God would lay the iniquity of us all.”

Of this deliverance Isaiah clearly marks out three stages in the course of this his final prophecy. Of these, the first consists in the overthrow of heathenism, whose powerless gods are contrasted with Him who “works, and who shall let it? who stretcheth out the heavens alone, who spreadeth abroad the earth by Himself;” and whose victory is shewn by His summoning Cyrus from the east to do His pleasure; while the powerful kingdoms of “Ethiopia and Egypt, and the Sabeans, men of stature, draw near in chains, and fall down before His people, and make supplication unto them, saying, Surely God is in you, and there is none else, there is no God.”

In the second stage, Israel and her friends and foes alike fall into the background : it is now the healing of the whole world. The controversy is no longer between the senseless idols of heathenism and the true God of the Jews ; the victory is no longer that of a single nation :—“It is a light thing that the Messiah should be God’s servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. He is given also as a light to the Gentiles, and to be God’s salvation unto the end of the earth.” The second stage, therefore, discloses to us a Redeemer ; “the servant of Jehovah,” the perfect pattern of all Christian virtues, of gentleness and mildness, and meekness and patience, and suffering ; qualities which under the Law had no place ; and He bears the griefs and

carries the sorrows of His people, and in Him they find their true happiness,—so that the “waste places of Jerusalem break forth into joy and sing together: for Jehovah hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem.”

The third and final stage consists in the establishment of Christ’s universal kingdom, “when the Gentiles come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising;” “when for their shame they have double, and for confusion they rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they possess the double; everlasting joy is upon them.” In this glorious kingdom the root of sin has been destroyed, and therefore its sad consequences have also ceased: “For behold I create new heavens, and a new earth; in which there shall no more be an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days.” There will be in it no premature decay, nor any other disappointment, “for none in it shall labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble.” Children shall be the strength and happiness of their parents, not their grief and misery. And, in a word, all wrongs, all injuries done by man to man shall have ceased: for, reverting to his former prophecies, he says, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain;” for “God shall extend peace to His Church like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.”

Finally, he contrasts in it the glories of the new dispensation with the condition of its prototype of old. There were then the vicissitudes of fortune; the happiness of to-day forgotten in the miseries of

to-morrow. Henceforward there is no fear of change ; “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me, saith the Lord : so shall your seed and your name remain.” Nor has it any enemies to fear ; for “it shall come to pass, that all flesh shall come to worship before Me, saith the Lord.”

Such, then, is the glorious prospect with which Isaiah concludes his prophecies : and if, as we believe, the first two stages have been clearly accomplished, if a Redeemer has been manifested who, both in the letter and the spirit, has in them fulfilled the Prophet’s words, so, doubtless, in God’s own time this final stage of blessedness will also be reached, and Christianity no longer be weak and feeble, divided in itself, and but of limited influence over the minds of its followers ; but, strong in faith and holiness, the Church will find her perfection in that close union with her Lord of which the Prophet speaks in the grandest terms of metaphor, — “The sun shall no more be her light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto her ; for Jehovah shall be unto her an everlasting light, and her God shall be her glory.”

## SERMON V.

ISAIAH xlii. 1—4.

*“Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law.”*

IN these words the Prophet briefly sets before us the character and attributes of that Servant of Jehovah, whose office, humiliation, and triumph form the main subject of the present prophecy. Already I have endeavoured to shew how conclusive is the evidence, derived both from external and internal sources, in support of the unbroken tradition, both of the Jewish and the Christian Church, that Isaiah is its real author; and that the so-called Babylonian Isaiah is an unreal fiction, invented for the purpose of supporting a theory simply of conjecture, and destitute of all solid proof. But in this, the final work of his old age, Isaiah, still true to the one great subject of his thoughts, nevertheless sees the Messiah, no longer simply in His relation to the people of Israel, but as the Saviour of all mankind. The local and temporary

fortunes of Jerusalem and her kings fall into the background; the deliverance now to be wrought is no longer the disruption of the league between Samaria and Damascus; it is no longer the pride of the Assyrian host quelled by the destroying angel in one death-fraught night: it is the redemption in and by the Messiah of the whole world, and the establishment of a Church which shall embrace all nations.

It is something distant to which the Prophet looks; for in the present there was little to give him consolation. In the later years of Hezekiah, in spite of the labours of both King and Prophet, the people more and more obstinately gave themselves over to idolatry: and everything was preparing for the day when Manasseh mounted the throne, and, by offering his own children unto Moloch, made the national apostacy complete. The last hope, therefore, of deliverance was gone: the bitterness of exile could alone work repentance in the nation, and bring them back to a sense of the true nature of the relation between them and God. The mass probably of the people, carried away by superficial theories, imagined that they would even find safety in adopting the same gods as their neighbours. They argued, perhaps, that their adherence to the doctrine of there being but one God exposed them to hatred; raised a barrier between them and other kingdoms; left them without allies; debarred them from adopting measures of public expediency because of their being irreconcilable with the unbending maxims of the theocratic government. The times were too dangerous for such overstrained views,

and required a more pliant and supple policy. But the Prophet, and those who, like him, understood the true purpose of Israel's calling and the real connection of cause and event in its history, foresaw the approaching hour of judgment. Idolatrous Israel must for a time cease to exist as a nation, and though it could not perish, for God had a purpose in it, and that purpose was unfulfilled, yet it must undergo His righteous visitation, and be purified and brought to a knowledge of itself by long years of saddening meditation in an enemy's land.

It was most important, therefore, that the schools of the prophets, as representing the spiritual life of the nation, should be prepared for the events about to happen, especially as very much would depend upon the course which they took. As a fact we know that their influence did greatly increase during the Babylonian exile, and that they returned as the dominant element, while the descendants of David sank to an inferior place. We know also that, owing to their increased influence, the nation never again lapsed into idolatry. And to this effect the arguments of Isaiah must greatly have contributed: for never elsewhere has the powerlessness of idols been shewn by such unanswerable proofs, and demonstrated by irony so keen and penetrating; and from his armoury other prophets, and the later Psalms written during the exile, drew their most polished weapons against the heathen gods.

By many it has been supposed that these twenty-

seven chapters form three separate discourses, addressed at different times to the schools of the prophets; and in support of this theory they allege that they naturally divide into three portions of nearly equal length, each containing nine chapters of our version, and with the termination marked by the occurrence of the same refrain, "There is no peace, saith the Lord—there is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked." But the prophecies of Isaiah are generally regular in their external form: and in the present case the unity of the matter throughout renders it the more probable view, that it is one connected treatise. For though there is an advance, there is no distinct division of subject. Certain points, indeed, which hold a prominent place in the first section, entirely disappear, and are never mentioned afterwards: but there are other thoughts which as constantly recur, and are never absent from the Prophet's mind. In each portion, nevertheless, there is always one subject which occupies a more important place than the rest, and it is in the relation which these bear to one another that we can trace the progress of the Prophet's argument. For in the first section he is chiefly occupied with the office of the Jewish people to proclaim the unity of the Godhead—an office peculiar to them up to the time of Messiah's advent. In the second we have the sufferings of Jehovah's Servant, by whom a Church is to be founded, with a fuller message of pardon and reconciliation for the whole world than the Jews had to bear. In the third we have the glory of the Israelitic people, which fol-

lows upon their acceptance of the Messiah's mission, and their consequent development into the Christian Church. But all three subjects are more or less ever present in the Prophet's mind, and run more or less parallel to one another throughout the whole discourse.

In the opening verses of the prophecy all three are plainly set forth: "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." For, first, we have the consummation of her office. Heathenism passes away; from the day of Messiah's advent, a stronger power is developed, before which it gradually recedes till it ceases to be the dominant form of human worship. The warfare, therefore, of the Jewish Church is accomplished; for her protest against polytheism has no longer any place. And, next, there is the pardon of iniquity, which Judaism could not proclaim. For pardon to be possible a better covenant must be established between God and man, by virtue of His death on whom God laid the iniquity of us all. Lastly, there is a reward infinitely greater than the punishment which her sins had brought upon her: for no longer is she limited to the narrow fortunes of one people, but, embracing the Gentile world within her fold, becomes God's appointed witness for the truth among all nations and in all times, with the promise of her Lord's perpetual presence, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against her.

There is, therefore, a real unity in the Prophet's



subject: for we may describe it as the mission of Israel in first preparing the way for, and finally attaining to its own full development in, the coming of the promised Redeemer, who was to spring from the Jewish race; and in whose new dispensation—that “new heavens and new earth which Jehovah would create”—God’s purposes of mercy unto mankind were to obtain a wider and more universal fulfilment than was possible under the Mosaic economy. And his style is worthy of his theme; for as the spirit of prophecy moved him to disclose to the earlier Church the inmost mystery of the Gospel, “that Christ must suffer, and enter into His glory,” so also did his own great gifts enable him to embody it in language which stands unequalled in the whole range of Hebrew literature. God had chosen an instrument fitted for the work he had to accomplish. It constantly, indeed, recalls to our minds the Isaiah of the previous prophecies, but age and meditation have ripened and mellowed his judgment. There are no longer the harsh contrasts, the abrupt bursts of vehemence, the fierce play of emotions, which troubled the current of his thoughts in earlier years. Twice only is their clear and regular flow disturbed: first in the fifty-third chapter, where in the anguish of sorrow he pours forth the same chafed stream of broken sentences which had been usual with him of old; and again in the concluding verses of the fifty-sixth chapter, and the first eleven verses of the fifty-seventh, where the earnestness of his reproof of the idolatrous tendencies of his countrymen again gives abruptness and

ruggedness to his style. Everywhere else the order of his words and the connexion of his ideas are alike plain and clear; and we feel that we have in them the last utterance of one whose strong and impulsive nature had been calmed down by the varied experience of an eventful life, and the mission of whose closing years was to give strength and consolation to those who loved God among his nation, by shewing them of how great a hope for all mankind they were the pledge, and that God would therefore certainly visit and redeem His people.

As the subjects of the Prophet's discourse are throughout simultaneously present in his mind, though each more prominently brought forward in its own several portion, I propose, in the first place, briefly to follow and explain the course of his thoughts in their mutual relation, and subsequently to consider more fully the office of Israel in connexion with the servant of Jehovah described to us in the text.

In the first part the Prophet chiefly presses upon the Jews the duty of performing that office to which they, under the providence of God, had been especially called. Doubtless every individual and nation and Church has some appointed duty, some place assigned it in the divine economy; and its wisdom and safety consist in its faithful discharge of its trust. But the Jews had been called to their office in an especial manner by prophecy and revelation, and, as the foremost branch of the family of Shem, it chiefly devolved upon

them to bear witness to the unity of the Godhead;— a truth which has ever found in the Semitic race its most earnest defenders. It was this truth which the Arabs victoriously bore, in the seventh century, both to the heathens and to a Church lapsing into a sensuous idolatry. It was this truth which gave permanency to their work, and earned for them, as a reward, the possession of some of the fairest portions of the earth. But with truth there was also the brand of falsehood upon their arms. Like Jehu of old, they wrought a kind of reformation, and had a limited reward; but their heart was not whole with God, and therefore their power has dwindled, and its springs dried up, and they have long ceased to exercise any influence for good. Especially the method in which they propagated their one truth was contrary to God's dealings; for the weapons of their warfare were carnal, and not spiritual. For punishment, God permits wrong and violence; many an evil is swept from the earth by the march of armies, which otherwise would have long cumbered the ground with its slow decay; but it is not God's method of planting the truth. "The Servant of Jehovah does not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets." It was by suffering that the Messiah saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied; and in all ages His work on earth can be carried on only by patient continuance in well-doing: whereas it was by deeds of violence, and in the spirit of intolerance, that the false prophet broke the bruised reed of heathen superstition, and quenched the faint embers of faith still smoking

in the Eastern Church. And possibly this was the reason why the possession of that one great truth, that the Lord God is One God, did not prepare their minds for faith in that same One God as mysteriously manifesting Himself in a Trinity of Persons, as a Father who creates, a Son who redeems, a Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.

But though the first-born of the Semitic race, and aided by an ever-growing revelation, the Jew was, nevertheless, with difficulty brought to the conviction of this truth. Perhaps in the earlier ages of the world, when nature seemed to the imaginations of the people itself an animated power, it was difficult for the mind to rise to the conception of a spiritual being in whom and by whom all things consist. Certainly the Jews, though fenced about by a minute and scrupulous ritual, intended mainly to impress upon them that God is One, did not really embrace the doctrine till the Babylonian exile had taught them, as it were, with thorns; and even then it was with narrow bigotry and in the spirit of exclusiveness. The divine discipline did, however, at length so deeply imprint this truth upon them, that through and by them it has become the peculiar heritage of their whole race. For when we meet on all sides with the acknowledgment that the Semitic race is the representative of the monotheistic principle, we are not to suppose that they are born so by a mere *lusus naturæ*, that they have a natural disposition to believe in One God, an instinct, as it were, like that of swallows to migrate. The powers of the human mind and its tendencies seem

everywhere much the same, but they are developed or debased by external circumstances, by the discipline of events, the course of public policy, the truth or falseness of the principles current among the people, the virtues and vices of their leading men, the character of their national literature, the conformation of their country, and other moral and physical causes. As these combine for good or evil, so a race rises or falls in the scale of humanity. The Semitic race had no natural tendency to monotheism : certainly we find the Jewish imagination ready to revel in the grossest enjoyments of heathen licentiousness ; but it was a race tenacious of purpose and strong for good and for evil ; as likely to be foremost in vice as the teachers of virtue. And God, by a long discipline, gradually moulded it, till it heartily embraced the doctrine of the unity of His nature ; and through evil report and good report it has held it firmly to the present day.

But when Isaiah wrote, this end had been by no means attained ; the people still practised with eagerness the grossest idolatry : and therefore he sets before them, in the clearest light, the utter powerlessness of idols ; with the keenest irony he reproaches them that of the stump of a tree, unfit for the carpenter's work, too worthless even to burn, they made them a god, whom they must "set up in his place or he cannot stand ; and who, though one cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble." With these he contrasts Him who meteth out the heavens with a span, and measureth the

waters with the hollow of His hand, and who is not merely the God of nature, but also of providence and of grace. He appeals to God's works of old, and to the fulfilment of prophecies publicly declared in His name, for evidence of the reality of His righteous government of the world; and as a last and decisive proof, he brings forward the call of Cyrus by name, and the overthrow of Babylon by his arms. Cyrus is God's instrument:—"My shepherd, who shall perform all My pleasure: I have holden him by the right hand, to subdue nations before him." It is God's work which he is summoned to perform, and the purpose of it does not centre in himself, but in God's people: "for Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name."

So special an instance of the intervention of God's providence in their favour, so long foretold, so clearly fulfilled, could scarcely fail in strongly impressing their minds with the conviction that He was in deed and reality the one true God. The verification also of so remarkable a prediction set the seal of inspiration to all the Prophet's words; so that it was no longer merely the weight of his arguments which demonstrated the powerlessness of idols, but they heard in them also the voice of Omnipotence. For in their deepest humiliation, dwelling as a scanty remnant among the many tribes, torn from distant homes to people that vast city, God summons from the east a mighty hero, and surrounds him with the glory of all but universal dominion; at his presence Babylon itself, whose mighty fortifications and long-accumulated stores

bade defiance to all human efforts, opens a way for his entrance, and while the king and nobles are deriding the hopes of the besieger, falls without a struggle: and the mission of this conqueror was solely for their sakes. In itself that general transplantation of races, which had been the policy of the Assyrian kings, was equally necessary for Cyrus. So vast an empire must fall to pieces of itself, if the inhabitants had local affections, and were united by the bonds of race, and religious worship, and national associations; but each nation, removed from its own land, was merged in a vast mass of abject slaves, with no tie to hold them together, no chieftain to head their efforts. Yet in this one instance Cyrus reverses the general policy of all conquerors. Surely the contrast between their fate and that of Babylon could not but demonstrate to them the conclusion which so long before the Prophet had deduced from it. She represented the strength of heathenism, and had every element of worldly success. The Jews were the people of the one true God, but so weak and few that they must apparently be trampled out in the collision of two such mighty empires as then struggled for the possession of Asia. But the fall of Babylon was the appointed proof of the weakness of idols; and therefore her mighty walls, her rapid river, her warlike population inured to victory, were all unable to rescue her. "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon: thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms: for they shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are

makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." The first act of the conqueror shall be to acknowledge the Lord God of heaven, to set the people free, and to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem in token of his homage.

The reason of Israel's salvation consists in the important office assigned her in the divine economy. In and by her the Gentiles are to be called to the knowledge of the truth. Long disobedient to her mission, she has been visited by repeated chastisements; but finally, being brought to repentance by so convincing a proof of the reality of God's government of events, she will henceforward devote herself to the discharge of her appointed duty: and thereupon the Prophet sees a glorious era commencing, of triumph for his nation, and of holiness and happiness for the world. It is in the third and last portion that this subject is most prominently brought forward. Full of vehement reproofs against idolatry, setting Israel's sin before its face even more directly than in the first part, he also describes the consequences which should follow upon their abandonment of their idols, and the blessedness they would enjoy in the new dispensation, when the Gentiles also should be gathered in, and the carnal be lost in the spiritual Israel; when Jew and Gentile alike "should be named the priests of the Lord, and clothed with the garments of salvation." To Isaiah it seemed as though this reign of holiness would immediately follow upon the return from exile: in reality his prophecies are even now but partially fulfilled.



For as a general rule the time of events was not revealed unto the prophets, though "they searched, what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify." They saw everything as present, like pictures raised up before their eyes. Partially, however, it was fulfilled when the Jews, upon their return from captivity, heartily embraced the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead; far more complete was its accomplishment when twelve Jewish fishermen carried the tidings of salvation to the whole world; but its great and final fulfilment is reserved for the time when the sacrifice of Christ shall not only virtually, but also practically, be the healing of the nations, and the Church become in fact what now she is in theory.

And between these two parts—between the Jewish Church as it was of old, and as it attains to its perfection in the Christian dispensation—stands the Messiah, Jehovah's Servant, who, through shame, and grief, and suffering, wins salvation for the whole world. In Him, as the Corner-stone, both Churches are made one; and Israel's repentance from her idolatry of old, and her reconstruction into a Church of which the members are a royal priesthood and a holy nation, are in Him and by Him. In Him her warfare is accomplished; by Him she receives the double of all her sins. To this portion, therefore, the hearts of believers have ever chiefly turned. For though the Prophet speaks in general terms, yet the purport of his teaching is so clear, that "he seems to have stood at the foot of the cross, and to have been present with

the Apostles when they laid the body of the Lord in the rich man's garden."

Such then, apparently, is the connexion of the Prophet's thoughts in the three several portions of this prophecy: it remains to consider more fully the main subject of the first part, namely, the office of the Church as originally represented by the Jews, but now, in its fuller development, by Christianity, to proclaim the knowledge of the one God.

In the text this duty is described as mainly devolving upon a person: "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold." And constantly, throughout the whole prophecy, but especially in the first and second portions, this Servant of Jehovah is repeatedly referred to.

Now few subjects have given rise to more discussion than the question, Who is this "Servant of Jehovah?" For some have argued that it means the whole Jewish people, while others confine it to such among them as remained true to Israel's calling; some see in it the prophetic order, others a single person—Cyrus, or Hezekiah, or Josiah; a few even imagine that Isaiah was describing himself, while one or two think they have discovered the true solution in the character of Jeremiah, and suggest that Baruch was possibly the author of the entire prophecy. Now, eagerly as the expositors of the "higher criticism" embrace and defend one or other of these views, they really are all borrowed from the writings of the Jewish apologists in the middle ages. The Jews at that time, in their controversies with Christians, were

pressed hard by the exactness with which the prophecies of Isaiah were fulfilled in our Lord : they had indeed a difficulty with which the theologians of the modern school are not troubled, namely, that all their own authorities, their paraphrasts and great teachers down to the ninth century, had uniformly applied the prophecy to the Messiah ; they saw also many of their leading men falling away and joining the Christians, unable to resist the argument, that if the words of Isaiah did apply to the Messiah, that Messiah must be Jesus of Nazareth ; and therefore they were obliged to invent some theory plausible enough to satisfy the minds of their people. The multitude of their theories plainly shews that no one was satisfactory. There was no one sufficiently in accord with the whole course of the prophecy, or sufficiently free from objections, to content them ; and each expositor, successful in destroying the hypotheses of his predecessors, originated a new explanation equally sure of refutation at the hand of the next interpreter. They were schemes, therefore, suggested for the sole purpose of evading a difficulty, and not matters of genuine belief, the honest product of conscientious conviction. In the works of the moderns even their schemes are strangely distorted. Bunsen, for instance, in his "God in History," quotes Saadia, "the great Rector of the Academy at Sura," as the authority for his theory, that Jeremiah was the servant of Jehovah, the man of sorrows, who bore our sin ; apparently not being aware that Saadia Gaon's own final view was that the "servant of Jehovah" was Cyrus, "God's

anointed," and "His shepherd." We may, however, dismiss these theories as the mere upgrowth of polemic necessity, and content ourselves with the fact that the Messianic interpretation has the consistent testimony in its favour both of the Jewish and also of the Christian Church. For the former, it may suffice to quote the Chaldee paraphrast, who renders the opening words, "Behold, My Servant, the Messiah;" and for the latter, St. Matthew's direct application of the passage to our Lord. The title also, *παῖς Θεοῦ*, given to the Saviour on several occasions in the New Testament, was probably taken from the Septuagint version of the "Servant of Jehovah;" and, chief of all, the attesting voice at His baptism and on the mount of Transfiguration plainly refers to the words of the first verse of my text.

But though this interpretation is the only one possible for Christians, yet the question may arise whether it exhausts the Prophet's meaning? especially when we find that Israel and Jacob are often directly addressed as Jehovah's servant and His elect:—"Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen<sup>a</sup>;" "For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect<sup>b</sup>;" "Thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen<sup>c</sup>;" and in the very chapter from which my text is taken, Jehovah's servant is even blamed,—“Who is blind, but My servant? or deaf, as My messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as Jehovah's

<sup>a</sup> Isa. xlv. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Ib. xlv. 4.

<sup>c</sup> Ib. xli. 8; add xlv. 2, 21, xlviii. 12, 20.

servant?" Now the true interpretation must embrace every portion of the prophecy, and we shall perhaps best arrive at it by considering what is the meaning of the title itself. We may notice then, concerning it, that it is the name given to Moses in the postscript to the book of Deuteronomy<sup>d</sup>, and in the commencement of the book of Joshua, where we read, "The Lord spake unto Joshua, saying, Moses, My servant, is dead." It is also given by God to David, in the message sent him respecting his purpose to build a temple,—“Go and tell My servant David<sup>e</sup>.” And again, to the prophets; as for instance, to Isaiah,—“The Lord said, Like as My servant Isaiah;” and seven times in Jeremiah it is applied to the prophets generally. In these and all similar cases it is a title of honour, and signifies one appointed by God for the execution of His purposes,—His minister; it does not mean one who has to obey, but implies a privilege, a favour, the being selected for a post of high dignity: and this sense is confirmed by the requirements of the law of parallelism; for we constantly find in the other member of the distich some such honourable title as “My elect,” “My chosen one,” “the seed of Abraham My friend.” Now the people of Israel were thus selected by God to occupy a post of high honour among the nations of the world; they were appointed by God as His ministers, His representatives, to perform a special and ennobling duty; they were called to be His servants; and the service they had to render was the salvation of the world,—for, in

<sup>d</sup> Chap. xxxiv. 5.

• 2 Sam. vii. 5.

the words of our Saviour, "Salvation is of the Jews," inasmuch as "to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the temple service, and the promises; theirs were the fathers; and of them as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

But the ministry to which the Jews were appointed was really and truly executed by God's "holy servant Jesus<sup>f</sup>." They were, in a measure, set for the salvation of the world; by them all nations of the earth were blessed; but only because their mission led on to, and was rendered complete in, Christ. And therefore in the first portion of the prophecy, Isaiah, being chiefly occupied with the Church's mission, speaks of it sometimes as it belongs to the body, and sometimes as it belongs to the head. Their functions are indeed distinct in their relation to one another, but combine in their relation to the external world. The Jews proclaimed God's truth to the world; they taught it His nature, and announced the coming of a Saviour: but in that Saviour still deeper mysteries of God's nature were revealed, and the promises of the earlier dispensation fulfilled. There is nothing therefore surprising in the fact that the title of God's servant is not confined in this first part to the Messiah, but is shared by the Jewish Church; for the Jewish Church shared in His office. But in the second part, in which the Prophet describes the work of atonement, the title is exclusively confined to our Lord; because in this work His Church has no share. The servant of Jehovah is now

<sup>f</sup> *παῖς*, Acts iv. 30.

distinguished from the Jews; for His special work is as necessary for them as for the Gentiles; they must as much be saved by His sacrifice as the remotest heathen; but this work is not confined to them, and therefore the promise,—“It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be my Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.”

The work therefore of the Atonement is the Messiah's special office, and in it His Church does not share; and consequently, in the second portion of the prophecy, no single instance occurs of the title “Servant of Jehovah” being applied to any but to Christ. But in proclaiming the knowledge of God, and in reconciling the world to the Father by bearing the good tidings of salvation to the whole creation, the Church is the appointed instrument for completing the Saviour's mission. And in performing this duty, a part of the text is directly fulfilled in the body, which was only virtually fulfilled in the Head: for “the servant of Jehovah,” we read, “shall bring forth judgment unto the Gentiles.”

The Jewish controversialists have indeed endeavoured to adapt even the second portion of the prophecy to their theory, that the Jewish nation is “the servant of Jehovah,” by ascribing a vicarious virtue to the calamities which, from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, they have had to endure. For they argue, that as being the chosen nation, the depositaries of the truth, they are the best, the noblest of the

people of the earth; the heart, as it were, of the one body of mankind: and as the heart bears all the sorrows of the body, so must Israel suffer for the sins of the whole world. But when, by their mediation, an atonement has been made, they expect that they shall be rewarded by the exclusive enjoyment of that era of glory which Isaiah finally describes<sup>ε</sup>.

But this interpretation is but an afterthought: nor can it invalidate the testimony of their ancient writers, who with one consent refer the whole prophecy to the Messiah. Even in later times, Abravanel says that "they are smitten with blindness who deny that Jehovah's servant is the Messiah." And an attentive consideration will shew that the idea of a Person, an Individual, was present throughout to the Prophet's mind. For there is a constant parallel maintained between the return from Babylon and the return from Egypt; and Moses therefore, the great leader of their first deliverance, is ever present to Isaiah's view as the prototype of the Messiah. The words seem ever sounding in his ear, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me." Was then Moses the meekest of men? so the Servant of Jehovah "shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets." Was Moses on his first appearance rejected? Did they say, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?" And again, "As for this man, Moses, we wot not what is become of him;" so Isaiah complains, "Who hath believed our report?" "He is despised and rejected

<sup>ε</sup> Chisuk Emuna, upon Isaiah lii. liii.



of men." The very title is taken from Moses: for as we have seen, he was the first to whom it was applied; "Moses, Jehovah's servant."

But the return from Babylon is far more triumphant than the exodus from Egypt. Moses led the Israelites only into a pastoral country, "flowing with milk and honey," a land of grass and flowers; but the Messiah restores the exiles to a land in which dwelleth holiness; full of spiritual blessings, where sin does not exist, and where, consequently, no voice of weeping is heard, nor the voice of crying; none hurt there or destroy; for the people are all righteous, — the redeemed of the Lord. Even the greatest natural blessings in it are not worthy of being mentioned in comparison with God's better gifts; the light of the sun is forgotten in the thought of the spiritual light which shines in men's hearts; "for Jehovah shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

And a similar contrast exists between the two leaders. On both the Spirit rests, and both are the mediators of a covenant: both are legislators, who by the institutions which they found, form a people for God's service; but the institutions of the one are temporary, of the other eternal. One prepares for, the other accomplishes God's work; one forms the people of God in their national character, the other in their spiritual. The office of the one is confined to the seed of Abraham after the flesh; the other includes the Gentiles. Lastly, the work of Moses may fail; but the Servant of Jehovah "shall not fail, till He have set judgment in the earth."

Throughout, then, Isaiah had a Person in his mind, even Him, whom Moses, in his high office as God's representative on earth, had shadowed forth; and both type and antetype are associated in the words,—“Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the Shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name?”

The two Churches therefore, the typical Church of the Jews, and the Christian Church, appear in the persons of their founders; and as Moses was especially the servant of Jehovah under the preparatory dispensation, so in the new dispensation it is the Messiah. And whenever the title is applied to the Church herself, it is because she shares in the Redeemer's office, and is His representative by reason of His presence with her according to His promise, “Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

But if to any it seem a difficulty that so high a title should in the first portion of the prophecy be applied to the Church, whereas in the second it is limited to the Church's Head, we must remember that this double sense is of too ordinary occurrence in Scripture to surprise us. And especially it is Isaiah's habit to start from some lower application of his theme, and omit it entirely from his view when he rises to those sacred mysteries which he was especially commissioned to

reveal. Even the prediction of Moses,—“A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me,” has a lower application to other manifestations of the prophetic spirit, besides its final fulfilment in our Lord, as any one will see who reads the verses which follow it. In Christ, prophecy reaches its highest culmination: for the Spirit rests not by measure upon Him, nor does He speak as He is inspired, but by His own omniscience; but mediately He also spake by the prophets of the old, and the evangelists of the new covenant. So also St. Paul's argument to the Galatians, that the promised seed of Abraham, as not being many, but one, was Christ personally, does not exclude the equally true interpretation, that in another sense the Jewish nation was Abraham's seed. For the literal Israel had its own share in the promises, and its own part to perform in blessing all the families of mankind; and the spiritual Israel, the blessed company of all believing people, has its part now, and must carry on the Messiah's work of redemption.

But it has been argued that prophecies cannot really belong to the Jewish Church, which speak in such unqualified terms of God's love and pleasure in her. But such objections are founded upon a misunderstanding. The sins and shortcomings of Israel were many, both as a Church and as a nation; but within her was contained whatever there was of faith upon the earth. Not of virtue, for the heathens, not having the law, were often a law unto themselves; but of that holiness which springs out of a knowledge

of God, they alone were capable, because they alone possessed a revelation, which is faith's sole objective ground. So far, then, no terms could be too high; none of which they were not worthy. But these terms must not be applied without discrimination to the individual members of the Jewish Church; for they belonged to them only so far as they were in practice what all were in theory. And similarly as the words pass on to the Christian Church. Of God's love and boundless pleasure in it the prophets speak in the most unqualified terms; but it can claim this love only so far as it attains to that holiness in which the prophets saw it arrayed. God's gifts are conditional, and depend upon man's acceptance of them; and though His promises fail not, yet the extent to which they are enjoyed, both by the whole Church and by its individual members, depends upon the strength of their faith, and their actual advance in holiness. But always, whatever there is of faith upon earth, is within the borders of the Church; and even in the worst times of history, "when the righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart," and doubt and unbelief are alone visible in the outward course of events, God doubtless has a remnant, to whom the words of His Prophets apply, just as in rebellious and schismatical Israel there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

A few remarks upon the passage chosen for my text may serve to confirm the foregoing conclusions. We read there that the Servant of Jehovah shall bring

forth judgment to the Gentiles. The Messiah's kingdom, therefore, is not one of war and violence, but of justice; the justice founded upon the golden law of loving our neighbour as ourselves. But this justice is the gift of God to His people; and accordingly the Psalmist claims it as the especial privilege in old time of the Jews, that "God gave them His judgments." The great principle of the world is an "enlightened self-interest;" and as interests must clash, litigation, and strife, and war, are the necessary consequence: it is only in that equal regard for the rights of others, which is taught men by the knowledge of God's nature and of His revealed will, that the Messiah's reign of peace is possible. We see, then, in the Prophet's words the Messiah as the teacher of justice in its noblest and Christian form, as it makes men as careful of the rights of others as of their own: and in this office the Church is also joined with Him; for its great office is also to teach mankind morality, as it is based upon religion. Of old the Jewish Church received the ten commandments and the moral law as summed up in those two great principles in which all duty is contained, of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves, and with the possession of them she was also the appointed witness of them to others. And now this duty has devolved upon the Christian Church, only it has the fuller light of the Messiah's explanation of God's commandments; and also higher motives, wherewith to encourage men, inasmuch as Christ has now "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

And next, we have the manner in which God's truth is to be propagated. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets." It is the way of gentleness, of long-suffering and forbearance: and such was the example which the Saviour set. And now, in extending His kingdom, His Church must use the same methods: all force, all violence is forbidden; it must not proselytize men by arms, nor spread religion at the sword's point. Its sole weapons must be the holy lives of its members, the example of earnest continuance in well-doing, and of mercy and love towards others. Even in seeking their good its efforts must be quiet and unostentatious; for so its Master would not have His very miracles noised abroad, and when the crowds thronged around Him He withdrew into the wilderness. And the reason of this is plain, namely, that Christianity requires, not an outward conformity, but an inward conviction, the result of a change in the conscience of the individual. A man cannot be made a Christian by the command of his rulers: he does not even become one by being carried along for the moment upon the stream of a popular movement, or by the temporary pressure of enthusiasm. External difficulties may be removed by these means; for God works by human instruments: but no human power or influence by itself suffices for the necessary change within the soul. There must be also the speaking of that still small voice, in which Elijah of old recognised the presence of God.

The propagators of Christianity must be gentle,

therefore, even in uprooting what is evil; for next we read that the bruised reed of heathenism is not to be broken. All but separated from God, with the spiritual life decayed, the moral feelings confused, the conscience polluted by sin, and uncertain of even the main truths of man's position, nevertheless there still are threads which bind even the heathen to God. And these are not to be severed. Whatever truth they hold is to be strengthened, and they must be guided into more truth. So St. Paul at Athens did not attack the popular belief, but seized upon whatever in it was true to lead them on unto higher and more spiritual views. For even in quitting error the mind suffers a rough shock. The new faith is long before it strikes its roots as deeply as the old ones, which were knotted together by a thousand associations. And constantly therefore we see converts long restless and uncertain, and often changing with painful fickleness from creed to creed, as if every doubt and suspicion ought to be welcomed instead of resisted. And often the overthrow even of a false creed simply produces the negation of belief, and a spirit of general scepticism, instead of implanting a better faith. God has nowhere left Himself so entirely without witness that it can be right to destroy all that a people hold, that so upon a foundation of ruins may be built up a new belief. Rather must Christians seek to strengthen whatever others hold of truth, to remove their ignorance, to enlighten their conscience, develop their moral feelings, and gradually guide them into a better knowledge of their state.

And so also of those who have had the light, but whose wick is ready to go out, the Messiah will not quench it. It is the picture of what was once strong and bright, ready to perish of exhaustion. Such persons may be entirely lost by the words of vehement reproof or contempt. The glimmering wick can only be fanned into a flame by the gentlest care: and so must they be won back by kindness into those paths of holiness in which their lamps will once again be brightly trimmed and burning.

And similarly of all who are in grief and sorrow; in worldly trouble, and in the first emotions of repentance; He who came to seek and save that which was lost, will encourage the weak in faith, will teach the ignorant, raise up the oppressed, bind up the broken-hearted. And in imitating His example, His Church, in the next place, “will bring forth judgment unto truth,” or rather, according to the truth, in a true and proper manner. For by the use of righteous means, by influencing men’s consciences by the holy example of its members, and convincing the minds and reasons of those whom it wins into the fold, it is not merely building upon the one foundation, Christ, but building also that which will endure, a work which has the seal of the Spirit set to the labours of men. And equally upon her own nominal members, the persuasion of the devout and earnest lives of her true sons will have more influence than any attempts to produce a mere external conformity.

And while thus using no force, the victory of Jehovah’s Servant is sure,—“He shall not fail, nor be



discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth, and the remotest lands wait for His law." Throughout, the Messiah's victory is won by patience and suffering; and so His Church, in spite of difficulties, and discouragements, and dangers, must persevere in its office; it must not cease its work; it must not be discouraged, or rather, bruised like the reed—for the same word is used in both places: on the contrary, it must steadily labour in its mission, assured that finally it will win the heathen for its inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for its possession. For it has received its commission from God, and He will prosper His work.

And thus, then, in that office of the servant of Jehovah, which in this first part was the subject of the Prophet's thoughts,—the office, namely, of bearing witness for God,—the Messiah does not stand alone, but is joined with His Church. For the Church, St. Paul tells us, is His fulness,—the fulness of Him that filleth all in all; and therefore it shares in His mission, that work only excepted which is Christ's special and peculiar office. Of old, accordingly, the Jewish Church was the appointed witness to God's unity: now the Christian Church proclaims the Father's love who made us, the Son's sacrifice who redeemed us, the Holy Ghost's indwelling, who sanctifies us. And this, we shall hereafter find, is the subject of the third portion of the prophecy, in which Isaiah describes the development of Judaism into Christianity, and the final and glorious triumph of Christian prin-

eiples. And though, for the present, that triumph be delayed, though Christianity be still limited in extent and partial in influence, yet the days will come when the Prophet's words shall be fully accomplished. Israel had long to wait for their Messiah; they had hoped He would come immediately after the return from exile: but they had still centuries of suffering to pass through; and when He came, it was not as they had expected, but in a better and more spiritual way. And so of all the promises of the prophets, the accomplishment may seem slow to man's eagerness, but finally they will be fulfilled in a better manner than we could dare hope, and then will Christ's people "possess the double: everlasting joy shall be upon them."

## SERMON VI.

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ISAIAH lii. 13.

*“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently; He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.”*

IN the verses immediately preceding the text, the Prophet sets before us the image of a glorious and triumphant march. The times of Judah's exile are fulfilled; her Deliverer has appeared; and she that had drunk at the Lord's hand the cup of His fury, is now commanded to awake, and put on her strength; to clothe herself in her beautiful garments, and prepare for her homeward journey. In the most inspiring words the Prophet tells her of her changed circumstances: he bids her shake off the dust of slavery; exhorts her to arise as became one who was now free, and seat herself upon her throne; and loose the bands of her neck, for no longer is she the captive daughter of Zion. It is a time when her thoughts naturally turn back to the most glorious period of her existence, when with mighty hand and outstretched arm God brought His people out of Egypt; and in reminding her of His mighty works then wrought in her behalf, the Prophet gives her the assurance that her deliverance from her present bondage shall be equally complete and glorious. And now, by a sudden change of scene, he places us in Jerusalem.

All there is excitement ; the remnant left in the land have heard that the exiles are on their way ; hourly they expect their appearance ; and watchmen upon every height are looking for their approach. At length, far off upon the hills which encircle the holy city, a herald appears, announcing their arrival ; and as they see him, they exclaim, “ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace ; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.” In the universal joy at the meeting of those so long separated, “ The watchmen lift up the voice ; with the voice they sing together : for they see eye to eye ”—the remnant left in the land see face to face the returning exiles—“ now that the Lord hath brought again Zion.” Again and again the Prophet exhorts them to rejoice, for “ Jehovah hath comforted His people ; hath redeemed Jerusalem ; hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations ; and caused all the ends of the earth to see the salvation of Judah’s God.” And finally, reverting to the exiles, changing the scene once more from Jerusalem to Babylon, he bids the captives commence their march : — “ Depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, go ye out of the midst of her ; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight : for Jehovah will go before you ; and the God of Israel will be your rereward.”

It is at the end of this magnificent description of Judah’s deliverance from Babylon and restoration to

her land, that Jehovah Himself in person addresses His people: and again the words are the same as so often have been spoken in the course of the prophecy,—“Behold My Servant!” but they are accompanied by a deeper mystery. Before, in the forty-second chapter, we had Messiah’s meekness and gentleness; that “He should not strive nor cry; that the bruised reed He would not break, nor quench the smoking flax.” In the forty-ninth chapter we had the declaration, that “in Him God would be glorified,” no longer in one people only, but throughout the world: “It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.” Already, therefore, the voice of God has described the Messiah’s character, and the universality of His redemption; and now He reveals the manner of that heavenly plan whereby His Servant became His salvation. He tells the mystery of a Messiah saving by suffering; a mystery which to the Jew has proved a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness, but which St. Paul affirms to be, “unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

As regards the form of the prophecy, the last three verses of the fifty-second chapter are the words of Jehovah Himself: and in them we have a summary, so to speak, of the longer explanation given by the

Prophet in the first ten verses of the fifty-third chapter: and then, once again, Jehovah speaks, and with His own mouth completes the prophecy by declaring Messiah's triumph:—"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

In all three parts alike,—whether in the opening words of the Almighty; or as step by step the Prophet follows the Messiah in all the details of His life of suffering, from His humble birth to His ignominious death, and in the reference which follows to His Resurrection, when "He shall prolong His days;" or lastly, when once again, Jehovah in His own person speaks of "Messiah's pouring out His soul unto death, and bearing the sin of many:"—throughout, one, and one only mystery, is consistently and uniformly set before Christ's people; and this I know not whether it can be more exactly described than in the Apostle's words, "that though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Consider, then, how this prophecy is introduced. It follows upon a triumphant description of Israel's deliverance; it is spoken in the hour of a great national rejoicing. All the previous degradation of the holy people,—their exile, their slavery, their hopeless misery, when, unable to find solace even in minstrelsy, they sat beside the waters of Babylon and wept,—all this is past, and God is giving them the double for all their sins. At this moment of general joy God in person speaks. He bids them look at their Deliverer, at the Servant whom He had especially chosen to be the instrument of their restoration. He is One in whom His soul delighteth; who, moreover, is to be exalted with threefold honours, and kings, awe-struck and astonished, are to stand abashed before Him. Yet at this time of joy, side by side with words expressive of the highest glory of this Servant, there is the strange and unexpected announcement of His humiliation; a tale of suffering and contempt and rejection, of scourges and wounding, of prison and a malefactor's death. Throughout there is scarcely a word of joyful import; but, like that roll spread before another prophet, "it is written within and without with lamentations, and mourning, and woe." For, step by step, the Deliverer passes through every form of humiliation, and contempt, and pain. It is "the man of sorrows" whom we see; one "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" "He is despised, and men hide their faces from Him;" "He is led speechless as a lamb to the slaughter;" "He is cut off by an unrighteous judg-

ment;" "He lies in the grave"—"is dead." Of whom speaketh the Prophet this? When, and where, did the leaders of the returned from Babylon thus suffer? Where is the record that Zerubbabel, or Jesus the son of Josedek, or Ezra, or Nehemiah met with so sad a fate? Or, plainly, must we not apply these words to a more spiritual deliverance, and say with the Chaldee paraphrast, "These things are spoken of King Messiah;" and with Philip the Deacon, "begin with this same Scripture, and preach unto men Jesus?"

To the modern critics this has been a difficulty. Denying inspiration, it follows, according to their theory, that the prophets, as mere poets and preachers, must adhere to the national idea of the Messiah; and this idea was that of a successful conqueror who would introduce a golden age of happiness. That one of them should contradict the national idea, should describe a suffering Messiah, one who was no conqueror, no hero, but a meek and lowly sufferer, the example of patient endurance unto death, plainly, in uninspired men, was an impossibility. And therefore they argue that "the Messianic interpretation is quite untenable; for the whole of the rest of the Old Testament is ignorant of a suffering Messiah, such as was this Servant of Jehovah; for in all confessedly Messianic passages it describes Him as a theocratic king, distinguished both by spiritual qualities, and also more especially by power and good fortune, by honour and glory. No other kind, therefore, of Messiah can come. For the prophets, as the originators and fosterers of the



idea of a Messiah, meant it for the comfort and encouragement of the people in misfortune, to give them joyful hope and confidence; and they would entirely have missed this end if they had so much as hinted at the Messiah being a Person distinguished by contempt only, and suffering and poverty. Rather they would have produced just the contrary feeling, especially among a people by no means inclined to resignation and meekness<sup>a</sup>."

The principle upon which this argument depends plainly is, that the prophets were not moved by God to declare the way of salvation, and had no other object in their words than to rouse the patriotism of their countrymen. Upon the believer in revelation, who sees in the prophets a higher use than the mere encouragement of the nation, the passage has just the contrary effect; for coming in so unlooked-for a place, at the end of a song of joy, it convinces him that such a description of suffering and sorrow was inspired by God to lead men to that Saviour who died for their sins, and in whom the Prophet's words had an exact fulfilment. The idea of a suffering Messiah would probably never have suggested itself naturally to any one; certainly not to one whose object was to comfort the people. To the Jews it was always a difficulty, which they sought in various ways to evade: even the Chaldee Paraphrast, while referring the passage to the Messiah, yet so alters the sense as to rescue His person from the humiliation it describes. And yet when Christ came, it was as a suffering

<sup>a</sup> Knobel, *Einl.*, in Jes. lii. 13.

Messiah. Modern critics seek, indeed, to evade this argument, and say that the representation which we have of Christ in the Gospels was suggested by this prophecy: but even so, it remains inexplicable how the idea of a suffering Messiah arose. But it is by no means true that this idea is peculiar to Isaiah: it certainly nowhere else is so fully worked out as in this prophecy, but it is ever a part of the Messianic idea throughout the Old Testament. Even in the first prediction, of the woman's Seed bruising the serpent's head, there is the idea of a painful struggle, and of a victory which leaves the mark of suffering upon the conqueror. And so it is always. But if this idea was so repugnant to the Jews, that the Apostles themselves, after our Lord's many conversations with them concerning His Passion, yet needed to be rebuked for their slowness of heart in believing what the prophets had spoken, we may safely draw the inference, that it was of no human origin, and that Isaiah in this place checked the current of his joyous emotions to give utterance to these words of sorrow, because he was controlled by an influence too powerful for him to resist.

For his words must have been very difficult for his contemporaries to understand; probably he himself did not know fully what they meant: and those who read them, must, like the Ethiopian eunuch, have often wondered, and asked, Of whom he spake? But in their due time their meaning became plain; and from that day Isaiah has been the Prophet most read and meditated upon. It was not so before

the Incarnation; Jeremiah was the great prophet of previous times: but Isaiah is the especial gift of the Jewish Church to Christian men; for the Saviour's office, and the whole plan of man's redemption in all its chief features, is nowhere pourtrayed so clearly as in his prophecies. It was the book, therefore, which St. Ambrose bade the youthful Augustine study upon his conversion; it has confirmed the faith of believers in all ages of the Church; and doubtless will remain the sure proof of the inspiration of the prophets, and the best explanation of the virtue of Christ's sacrifice upon the cross, as long as the Church shall last.

There is also a second point to be noticed of some importance with respect to the place where this description of the Messiah's sufferings occurs. It is at the end of the narrative of the triumphant return of the exiles from Babylon. If, therefore, we reject the Messianic interpretation, we are not at liberty to wander here and there, and select at our fancy some sage or hero unto whom to apply the prophecy. Neither King Josiah, nor Jeremiah the Prophet, nor the children of King Zedekiah lived after the return from Babylon. If Baruch wrote these chapters as a threnody in honour of his beloved master, it is an inexplicable difficulty how he could describe him as leading the exiles back from captivity! Either, therefore, we must adhere to the literal interpretation,—and in that case Zerubbabel, Jesus the son of Josedek, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Cyrus are the sole characters from whom

to select the "Servant of Jehovah;" or, with the Jewish Church from times long antecedent to the birth of our Lord, and the Christian Church throughout its whole existence, we must adopt the spiritual interpretation, and see in the return from Babylon a type of the deliverance of mankind from captivity to Satan, and in Jehovah's Servant "the Lord's Christ."

To abandon the spiritual interpretation, and expound the Bible as an ordinary book, is to Christians an impossibility. It might indeed do away with much diversity of opinion, and save men much debate. For men do not debate about what they do not value, and if the Bible were not a law to our consciences, questions connected with it might indeed still be discussed as matters of archæological interest, but men generally would have little interest in them. Men debate every word and sentence in a law, and give its phrases every possible meaning, because their interests are affected by it; and as long as the Bible is a law, affecting us in every action of our lives, so long men will scrutinize every word, and give it every possible sense, correct and incorrect. But such controversies are a proof of life, of earnestness, of reality: and so long as men value the Bible, every possible opinion will be held concerning every doctrine contained, or apparently contained, in it. Take away its value, and controversy will be at an end. The old saying of the Proverbs will be fulfilled, that where there are no oxen, the crib is clean. A Church with no commission from God, no authority, no revealed truth, no inspired Word, would be doubtless a very peaceful

Church, would stir up no controversies, and occasion no heart-burnings ; but she would influence no minds, awake no sympathies, gain no friends, make no enemies, do no good, and be powerless even for evil. She would be fit only, as salt that had lost its savour, to be cast out to the dunghill, and trampled under foot of men.

But, as I said, Christians are not at liberty to deny the spiritual interpretation of the Old Testament ; for the New Testament authorizes this interpretation everywhere. It is its principle that the facts of the Old Testament happened unto the Jews for ensamples, and are written for our admonition. They are not mere facts of history, but lessons, teaching sometimes moral truths, but more frequently the mysteries of the Gospel. With what boldness of application does St. Paul tell us that he would not have us ignorant that the passage of the Red Sea was a type of Christian baptism, and that the water from the smitten rock signified the blood flowing from Christ's side ! And again, that Sarah represented the Christian Church, and Hagar that of the Jews. As long therefore as we profess obedience to the New Testament, so long we must concede the principle, that the facts and doctrines and prophecies of the Old Testament are not to be confined to the Jews, and their primary sense, but find their only true and adequate fulfilment in the Christian Church, and in Him who is its Head.

It is therefore an integral part of Christian interpretation to ascribe a twofold character to the Church of old. She had her historical and national existence,

with her own fates and fortunes ; and she was also the type of that dispensation in which the truths given to her under a veil are seen face to face. And just as of old her deliverance from Egypt typified the deliverance of mankind from the bondage of corruption, and their admission into the glorious liberty of the sons of God ; so this triumphant march of the exiles from Babylon, bearing with pure and holy hands the vessels of the Lord, was but faintly accomplished when Ezra led from thence scarcely fifty thousand souls. This messenger upon the mountains, publishing a gospel of peace, the good tidings of salvation, was but in shadow fulfilled in the herald who told the poverty-stricken remnant at Jerusalem that their brethren, footsore and weary with their way, were returning, saddened by fast and mourning, to weep as they laid the foundations of their house of God. And equally the troubled fortunes of the city,—nobly as its heroic people century after century battled, and battled finally in vain, for its freedom,—form no satisfactory conclusion to the bright pictures which filled the Prophet's mind. As at first they built their wall with the weapons of war in the one hand, while the other plied the implements of peace ; so to the last their lot was a struggle, an effort, till their nation and polity were quenched in blood.

In past history, therefore, no adequate fulfilment can be found, and either we have in the Old Testament the gorgeous phantasies of poetry and the exaggerations of Oriental trope and metaphor, or it offers unto us the sober and steady light of that word of

prophecy, appealed to by St. Peter as a more sure proof of the Saviour's mission than miracle itself. And if the Prophet's words, couched often, it is true, as regards their outward form, in the guise of the noblest poetry, still do, word by word and sentence by sentence, find a thorough and complete fulfilment in our Lord, and in that dispensation of which He is the Mediator, well may our faith rest upon them in calm and unswerving confidence; and, as we read of the temporal deliverances of that chosen race of old, whose fortunes prefigured the trials and difficulties, and victories and onward progress both of the Christian Church and of the individual soul of each Christian, well may we elevate our hearts to the thought of a better deliverance; when the soul shall be for ever redeemed from the bondage of corruption; when it shall cast off from its neck the bonds of those sins which had bowed it down in degradation, and, shaking itself free from the dust of earth, shall put on the garments of holiness, and have its citizenship in that heavenly Jerusalem, of which the Messiah is the spiritual King.

The Jew, untaught by long chastisement, still looks for a temporal deliverance; still, as he reads the bright pictures of future glory in the prophetic records, he dreams of a return to the land of promise, and of an earthly kingdom, the pomp and magnificence of which shall far exceed the splendour of Solomon's reign. The Christian thinks, or ought to think, of a deliverance not of the body, but of the soul; a victory over the power of evil, over our inborn corruption, and

which, though won in this world, shall attain to its full reward only in the world to come.

Among the prophecies which prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the present holds the most important place. For the peculiar feature of the Christian dispensation is, that its Messiah, though He was very God, yet humbled Himself; not merely to man's estate, but to be lowly among men, and despised, and finally to die, that He might save His people by suffering in their stead: and it is only after thus pouring out His soul unto death that He attains to His triumph, by rising from the dead and being exalted to God's right hand as a Prince and a Saviour. Now, while there are numerous passages, especially in the Psalms, which bear witness to this mystery, still there is none where it is so expressly and minutely set forth as by Isaiah in the present prophecy; and naturally there is a constant reference to Isaiah's words, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly, in all those passages of the New Testament which treat of our Lord's Passion. To convince His disciples of the necessity of His suffering,—a truth which they were so slow in learning,—our Lord Himself on more than one occasion appealed in general terms to the prophetic record:—"The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him;" "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written in the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished;" "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer." It was not, however, until they had been taught by His own



mouth, in that walk to Emmaus, the meaning of the prophetic declarations, and the Holy Ghost had subsequently opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, that they were able to receive the plain meaning of what the prophets had said; but thenceforward they ever prominently and directly taught, as the very centre of the faith, the great truth revealed in this chapter, that the Messiah is a Saviour, because "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

Appealed to thus constantly in the New Testament, and subsequently by all the Fathers of the Christian Church, this prophecy of Isaiah holds the foremost place among the Old Testament proofs of our Lord and Saviour Jesus of Nazareth being the Messiah: for the Gospel scheme of salvation rests upon His Passion. If, therefore, it could be proved, either that Isaiah was not speaking here of the Messiah, or that his words are not adequately fulfilled in our Lord, we have no clearer or stronger testimony to appeal to; none upon which our faith could rest with such assured confidence. It is not indeed true that the argument from prophecy depends upon any single passage; still, if this passage be taken from us, we have lost the strongest bulwark and defence of the argument from prophecy as a whole.

As was to be expected, therefore, in a matter of so great importance, various attempts have been made to invalidate its cogency. For, first of all, the Jews, urged by the plain application of Isaiah's words to our Lord, and compelled to own that the Old Testament did contain the doctrine of a suffering Messiah, have

endeavoured to find some explanation, which might serve at least to satisfy the minds of their own people. And now that their writers no longer hold an important place in the ranks of literature, yet, in the restlessness of modern criticism, most of the schemes which they originated have been reproduced by Christian authors, and supported by arguments sufficiently specious to merit some attention, though based for the most part upon suppositions only.

I propose therefore to-day, in the rest of this discourse, to give a slight sketch of the history of the Jewish interpretation of this prophecy, in the belief that it will conduce to the right understanding both of the Gospel narrative, and also of the meaning of the Prophet's words.

The Jewish interpretation, then, of this passage of Holy Scripture naturally divides itself into three distinct eras: in the first of which we find the simple Messianic exposition; in the second the doctrine of two Messiahs; while the third offers us a host of discordant theories, the object of which was not so much to find the true meaning of the prophecy, as to discover some way of obviating the arguments drawn from it by Christian writers. Of these three periods, the views held in the first and second are of native origin, and unquestionably honest in their intention; while those of the third were the result merely of controversial necessities.

I. In the first and most ancient school of Jewish interpretation, their expositors held consistently that

the Servant of Jehovah in Isaiah's prophecy was the Messiah, the son of David. As this is acknowledged even by the teachers of the third school, it will not be necessary to enter upon any formal proof; for they seek to evade its force, not by denying the fact, but by saying with Abravanel, "that the Chaldee Paraphrast and the wise men of old gave not the genuine and simple interpretation, but one mystical and secondary." A fact of greater importance to observe is, that while their ancient doctors teach that these prophecies do refer to Messiah, they carefully explain away every word which implies the notion of any pain or grief, or suffering or humiliation, or contempt attaching itself to Him. In the Targum, for instance, or Chaldee Paraphrase of Jonathan, while every word which speaks of glory and honour is claimed for the Messiah, every contrary word is made to apply to the Jewish nation. "Behold," he says, "My Servant the Messiah shall prosper; He shall be high, and great, and strong exceedingly:" but it is the people of Israel "whose aspect, as they long for His coming, is dark among the nations, and their glory inferior to that of the sons of men." Similarly in the fifty-third chapter: "The holy generation, the elect of Israel, pray for Israel's sins, and for their sake Judah's iniquities are forgiven: though we, the Jewish people, be regarded as bruised, smitten from before God, and afflicted."

The exact period at which this method of interpretation first became current after the return from Babylon, we cannot tell; but as the Paraphrase in question

is referred by all the chief authorities to a period somewhat antecedent to the birth of our Lord, it clearly shews what was the prevailing doctrine concerning the Messiah at that time. The Jews believed solely in a triumphant and glorious Deliverer, a great national hero. And that such was the case we gather also incidentally from the New Testament. For when Christ spake, "signifying what death He should die, the people answered Him, We have heard out of the law, that the Messiah abideth for ever: and how sayest Thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" Similarly, when He revealed to His apostles the approaching mystery of His Passion, "Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him." When, too, the first act of His Passion commenced, though He had immediately before foreshewn it to them in the broken bread and the poured-out wine, they all forsook Him and fled; because their expectations were still entirely set upon the hope of a temporal restoration. And when, therefore, the disciples were conversing upon their way to Emmaus, though tidings had been brought them of His resurrection, yet were their conclusions so obstinately foregone, that they could talk only of their disappointment: "We trusted that it had been He who would have redeemed Israel."

To us, when we read the New Testament, with our minds full of the many psalms and prophecies which describe a suffering Messiah, it seems difficult to understand how it was that not only the mass of the people, but also men like the apostles, were so offended

at the thought of a suffering Christ, so obstinately bent upon the expectation of an immediate restoration of their national glory. But when we find that the received teaching of the synagogue, probably for several centuries, had carefully explained away every word indicative of Messiah's humiliation; and consider, moreover, how strong an influence those doctrines exercise over us in which we have been brought up, our surprise passes away. Especially as this teaching had itself grown out of the national mind; for from the time of the Babylonian exile and the complete abandonment of idolatry, an intense pride had taken possession of the hearts of the whole people; and though this had braced them up to many an act of heroic valour, it had led them also to arrogate to themselves too much from the intimate relation in which they stood to God as the people of His covenant. Thus they had even invented the dogma, that every member of their race was sure of salvation. There were, indeed, one or two sins which could exclude even a Jew from Paradise, such, for instance, as the denial of the existence of a God or of the divine authority of the Mosaic Law; but short of this, every descendant of Abraham was sure of salvation. The Messiah, therefore, was not connected in their minds with the idea of spiritual blessings; His mission was not to raise mankind from their lost state by nature, and bring them into spiritual communion with God: He was simply a national chieftain, a warrior king, a conqueror, whose arms would deluge continents with the blood of their enemies, and place their

nation upon the highest pinnacle of worldly magnificence.

To uproot so great an error, and to substitute spiritual for temporal blessings, the conviction of sin for self-righteousness, love to all mankind in the place of an intense and selfish patriotism,—in one word, to lead men to a Messiah saving the souls of Jew and Gentile alike by His humiliation, in the place of a hero who by feats of arms would gratify their deep-set rancour against their enemies and aggrandize their nation, this was the task which the first preachers of Christianity had to accomplish. It was a lesson which they themselves had found it hard to learn, and the first preaching of it was ever enough to make the bulk of the Jews their stern and determined foes.

But if such was the current state of feeling among the Jews, and the received teaching of their scribes, how utterly without foundation was that exploded fallacy, that the life and sufferings of our Lord were not matters of fact, but a myth which grew out of the popular mind. It assumes that the Jews put upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament the same interpretation that we do; and that the teaching of the synagogue, when it could but at most feel after the truth, was identical with the teaching of the Church, now that the words of the Psalms and the Prophets have been fulfilled. On the contrary, we know that the whole course of Jewish literature, till long after our Saviour's birth, absolutely ignored the idea of a suffering Messiah, and that the great stumbling-block in the way of the Jews was that our Lord con-

tradicted all their most cherished hopes. Never had men more to unlearn than they had, before they could take Christ's yoke upon them, and learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart, and count it worthy of all joy when "for conscience toward God, they endured grief, suffering wrongfully: as being even thereunto called, because their Messiah also had suffered for them, and left them an example that they should follow His steps."

II. But gradually the constant examination of the prophecies led to the second stage of Jewish interpretation, in which they taught that there would be two Messiahs, one the son of David, and the other the son of Joseph. The passage which chiefly led them to this theory is found in Zech. xii. 10—12, where we read, that "they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn: in that day there shall be a great mourning . . . and the land shall mourn." In both Talmuds this passage is proposed for examination; and in the earlier, or Jerusalem Talmud, written in the third century of our era, we find only the ancient interpretation. "It may signify," we read, "the mourning over the Messiah, or the mourning caused by inbred lust." But gradually another interpretation grew up; and in the Babylonian Talmud, collected in the seventh century, we read that this mourning is "because of Messiah, the son of Joseph, who shall be slain." And from this time

for several centuries it was the current doctrine that there were to be two Messiahs, to the one of whom they applied every passage of prophecy expressive of suffering, while to Messiah the son of David belonged all such as speak of glory and triumph.

The proofs which they adduce for this double Messiahship are but slight: they say, for instance, that the sceptre which shall not depart from Judah is the son of David, but that the lawgiver from between his feet is the son of Joseph. And again: as God of old led His people from Egypt by the hands of Moses and Aaron, so shall their deliverance from their present worse captivity unto Edom,—by which they mean the Roman empire,—be the work of two Messiahs.

But possibly this theory is not to be looked upon as a formal doctrine, but rather as an attempt to reconcile apparent discrepancies in the prophecies, coupled with the wish to assign some part in their national deliverance to the ten tribes. For at this era the belief was generally prevalent among the Jews, that the ten tribes would shortly be restored to their inheritance, and that their leader would be one sprung from themselves; and therefore they called him the son of Joseph, and sometimes the son of Ephraim, not as being born of a father of that name, but because the ten tribes are often collectively spoken of by the prophets as Joseph, or Ephraim. There is in it therefore no reference whatsoever to the putative father of our Lord; it simply means that he was to be the leader of the ten tribes; and whenever they speak of him by his proper name they call him, sometimes Nehemiah



the son of Huriel, and sometimes Menachem the son of Ammiel.

Messiah the Son of Joseph, therefore, is the hero and restorer of the ten tribes; and to him they apply all those sorrows and humiliations which their national pride made them indignantly reject from the character of Messiah-ben-David. They describe the son of Joseph, therefore, in terms expressive of the most abject misery, wandering from place to place as a mendicant, squalid and in want, and struck even with leprosy—an idea which they take from Isa. liii. 4, where the word translated in our version “stricken” is by many rendered “leprous;” as, for instance, in the Latin Vulgate, “Nos putavimus Eum quasi leprosum.” And another part of this chapter serves as the groundwork for the further notion, that he shall sit as a beggar at the gates of Rome, and there bind up the sores of a crowd of lepers congregated round him.

But after a period of time passed thus in misery, a few of the dispersed of the ten tribes adopt him as their leader, and at their head he begins a war with the Roman Empire, slays its king, spoils the palace of Julian, in which he finds the sacred vessels plundered from the temple, and returns in triumph to Jerusalem. Thence he next marches to take vengeance upon the heathen, and puts to death the Gentile inhabitants of all the towns in Palestine, from Damascus to Ascalon, and by this deed strikes terror into all the earth. These labours are called by the Jews the “sorrows of Messiah,” and the greatest soon follows: for an antechrist, an ante-messiah arises, named Armillus, (the

meaning of which title I have already explained,) who fulfils the prophecies of Ezekiel by stirring up the hosts of Gog and Magog to battle; and though they are at first defeated with great slaughter, yet finally they prevail, and put Messiah-ben-Joseph with his army to the sword, and as they march onward from the battle-field towards Jerusalem, the fearful mourning takes place of which Zechariah speaks. It is a time of terrible misery, and the destruction of every Jew seems inevitable; but at its height the trumpet of the Archangel Michael sounds, and at its first blast, Messiah-ben-David and Elijah appear, who defeat Armillus, and slay both him and his army with an incredible slaughter. And quickly the trumpet again sounds, and all the dead Israelites arise to take part in their national restoration, and among them Messiah-ben-Joseph: and at the third blast, the dispersed of the ten tribes assemble, and the era of Jewish universal empire begins.

Upon no point are the Jews much more at variance among themselves than upon the nature of this resurrection, and the duration of the period which must intervene between it and the general resurrection. Among many conflicting theories, perhaps the one most generally received is, that it will be reserved as a special privilege for the more holy and upright members of their race, such as are worthy to share in the glories of so great a triumph; while the careless and negligent will still lie in their graves till the general resurrection, in which some of the more liberal of their expositors permit even the Gentiles to share.

Such then were the figments with which the Jews solaced themselves during the long centuries of their bitter degradation, when everywhere they were the mark for scorn, and contumely, and wrong, from Christian and Mohammedan alike. But whether these notions were originally put forth seriously, or were not rather intended by the older expositors as a sort of allegory, is capable of doubt. In course of time, however, they were received as authoritative, and taught by their chief writers as such, though, as their fortunes changed, the outlines of the story were altered, and new developments added to suit it to their needs. But these we need not follow: the one important fact to notice is, that the independent study of their Scriptures did lead them to the doctrine of a suffering Messiah. True to their national tradition, they carefully separated every notion of humiliation from their chief Messiah, David's son; but they acknowledged that the tale of suffering was there: they distorted it, invented for themselves a new Messiah, an inferior hero, sprung from the ten tribes; but in describing him they took their ideas from the words of the prophets, and by the main features of his history owned that the low estate of the Messiah, his sufferings and death, were truly written in their prophetic books.

III. But in the tenth and subsequent centuries, finding themselves pressed by the arguments of Christian writers,—who shewed them out of their own books that their earlier authors had applied to Mes-

siah-ben-David the very passages which they referred to Messiah-ben-Joseph, and thence drew the conclusion that the Jewish Scriptures did contain the doctrine of a Lamb of God, who, by dying, should take away the sins of the world,—their Rabbies had no other resource than to seek for some other interpretation. Their old theories were proving untenable; many of their ablest minds were quitting their communion; and it was therefore incumbent upon them to provide some popular explanation of their holy books, sufficiently specious to satisfy the minds of the generality. Hitherto they had been supported by the hope of the immediate coming of their hero; they had fixed date after date for his appearing, but he still delayed; and it was but mortifying to be told that their restoration was thus indefinitely deferred because of their sins. Under such circumstances their faith was neither so simple nor so earnest as it had been before; and a cold and sceptical spirit generally prevailed even in those writers who are still familiarly known among us as having at this period placed the Jewish name foremost both in science and literature, and maintained it there for some centuries. But the national feeling was still strong among them,—for centuries of ill-usage had firmly knit everywhere Jew to Jew,—and they prepared still to defend their traditions: but their lessons were no longer addressed to disciples willing to accept their teaching upon their mere authority; and besides, they were face to face with Christians, arguing with them from their own books. They must give proof, therefore, or the sem-

blance of proof, and their arguments must be sufficiently specious to make their people ready still to endure persecution without the secret misgiving that possibly their Messiah had already come.

While, then, in the services of their synagogue this passage of Isaiah is still applied to the Messiah, and its Messianic interpretation is thus the sole authorized doctrine, they argued that this was but a mere application of it, and not the primary meaning. It was, they said, a mystical interpretation, and as such only to be received. And so far there is a consent among them : but what was the genuine and proper interpretation was a question upon which they found it harder to agree. For some thought that a person was clearly meant, and therefore looked for one whose history bore some resemblance to the Prophet's words ; and selected Uzziah, because of his leprosy ; or Josiah, because of his early death ; or the Prophet Jeremiah, or Isaiah ; or the fabulous martyr, Akibah : while others, with more show of argument, taught that the Servant of Jehovah signified the Jewish nation : either, in the first place, collectively,—and this is the most generally received view ; or, secondly, as represented by the just and pious portion among them ; or, thirdly, by the prophetic order.

I need scarcely enter at any length upon these views : enough to say, that no person can be found in Jewish history who is not altogether too small and unworthy to be the theme of these prophecies. How can King Josiah be said to have been brought as a lamb to the slaughter, when he fell in a battle of his

own seeking? Or what share had he in the return from Babylon? Of Isaiah we know nothing to justify us in supposing that his life was marked by any especial degree of suffering, and the tradition of his death is simply fabulous; for, as he flees from King Manasseh, he is swallowed by a cedar-tree, and the King commands the cedar-tree to be sawn asunder, and as the workmen obey the command blood flows from the wound. As for the martyr Akibah, he was apparently an allegorical personage, with no real historical existence, and the question therefore would still remain unanswered whom the Prophet really meant. As for the notion that it was Jeremiah, we might well say, with the German critics, that it scarcely deserves mentioning<sup>b</sup>, were it not that it has been again put forward by the author of "God in History," as a most notable discovery; but it requires so many suppositions to be first granted, that we can scarcely regard the theory as seriously intended. For we must assume that Baruch was the author of the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah: and that though thus commissioned to declare the calling of Cyrus, and the restoration from Babylon, yet that his name was thought unworthy of record, while Obadiah's name was preserved, though he wrote but a single chapter, and Haggai's and Malachi's, though neither of them occupied so distinguished a place in Jewish history as that of Jeremiah's minister. We have further to assume in Baruch the existence of the same wonderfully balanced powers which are so remarkable in the true Isaiah. Every other

<sup>b</sup> Reinke, *Die mes. Weis. bei den Proph.*, ii. 43.

prophet excels in some one faculty and has his own peculiar turn of genius, Isaiah equals each one separately in his own master gift: and the same extraordinary versatility of power is granted by Ewald—the critic best qualified to speak upon such subjects—of the author of these last twenty-seven chapters. Surely so great a prophet, commissioned to declare such weighty truths, the author of such convincing arguments against idolatry, and possessed of such extraordinary powers, would never have been confined by Jewish tradition to so inferior a place as that which he at present holds. It is further necessary to assume that he survived Jeremiah; but the Jewish tradition is, that after the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar he and Baruch withdrew to Babylon together<sup>c</sup>; or, as others say, to Judæa<sup>d</sup>, and that Jeremiah there lived to an extreme old age. Certainly if the last four verses of his prophecy<sup>e</sup> are genuine, this must have been the case; but perhaps too great uncertainty rests upon them for us to be able to lay much stress upon their authority. But in opposition to the Jewish account Bunsen resuscitates a tradition recorded by one or two Christian Fathers<sup>f</sup>, that Jeremiah was stoned by the Jews at Tahpanhes; and he accuses the Jews of wilfully concealing this national crime; and Josephus, who is entirely silent upon the matter, is dismissed as being sly<sup>g</sup>. But a tradition, first mentioned nine or ten centuries after the supposed fact, and entirely unsupported by the people to whom it referred, and who

<sup>c</sup> Seder Olam Rabba, ch. 26.    <sup>d</sup> Sal. Jarchi.    <sup>e</sup> ch. lii. 31—34.

<sup>f</sup> Tertull. adv. Gnost., c. 8; Hieron. adv. Jovin., ii. 37.    <sup>g</sup> Klug.

were by no means disposed to hide their national delinquencies, deserves very little consideration. Certainly no one who remembers the place which Jeremiah held among his countrymen after the return from exile; how they believed that he had concealed the ark, and Urim and Thummim, and sacred fire; how they thought he was still alive, and would again appear; how many said even of our Lord that He was Jeremiah; and how he was the "grey-haired prophet of their visions, exceeding glorious, and of a wonderful and excellent majesty, who summoned Judas Maccabeus to defend his country, and girt him with a golden sword,"—no one who remembers these things can doubt but that, if he had been stoned by his countrymen, they would have seen in the misfortunes which befel them at the hand of the Syrian kings the punishment of so great a crime, and have explained by it, to themselves, the extreme difference between their actual state and that which had been predicted by the prophets.

We may dismiss Bunsen's theory, therefore, as built upon too many and too improbable conjectures to satisfy any one who requires reasonable grounds for what he believes: and I have previously shewn that it is as entirely contradicted by internal as it is unsupported by external evidence. Far more important is their view who consider that by the servant of Jehovah is signified the Jewish nation. We may even fairly describe this as the received Jewish exposition; for whether it be the nation collectively, or some special portion of it, is a matter simply of



detail, and nearly all their chief writers finally settled upon one or other of these theories. It is moreover, I think, undeniable, that in the first portion there are passages in which the servant of Jehovah does signify primarily the Jewish Church, and fully and finally the Christian Church. The question is, whether this explanation exhausts the meaning; whether the description of Jehovah's servant does not go far beyond it, and describe a person who can be no other than our Lord? Especially in the second portion we may demand, whether there is a single passage applicable to the people of Israel, or which does not directly contradict this idea? It is too ordinary a thing for the prophets to begin with some minor and lower theme, and rise from it to one vast spiritual and eternal, for us to be astonished at Isaiah's commencing with the office of the Jewish Church to proclaim divine truth to the Gentiles, and ending with Him who is the Truth, the Teacher in whom all truth centres. Doubtless the mission of the Jewish Church was in a measure the same as that of Christ. She was His witness to the heathen, and many truths were confided to her keeping, some of which she was to proclaim to those around her, while others were to be recorded for the future proof of the Messiah's mission. In this way she was a fellow-worker with Christ and a sharer in His office; and still more so is the Christian Church, and therefore she is described by St. Paul as the body of which He is the Head—as forming, that is, one organic whole with Him, and co-operating with Him in His work.

We have before seen that the Jews themselves felt great difficulty in confining the exposition of Jehovah's servant to their nation; and virtually confessed as much, by the strangeness of their theory respecting the virtue of the sufferings which they are at present undergoing. They clearly saw that the sufferings described in the fifty-third chapter are vicarious, and had no alternative, therefore, but to shew that their nation was bearing the punishment of sins committed by others, who necessarily must be the heathen: but nothing but the exigencies of controversy could have produced such a theory, especially at a time when they were also teaching that the delay in the Messiah's coming was owing to their own sins. But omitting this, there are passages in which Jehovah's servant and the Jewish nation are clearly distinguished. Thus we read, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth<sup>h</sup>." Again, He was "formed from the womb to be Jehovah's servant, to bring Jacob again to Him<sup>i</sup>." He is distinguished even from those who fear God: for the Prophet asks, "Who is among you that feareth Jehovah, that obeyeth the voice of His servant<sup>j</sup>?" He is even "abhorred of the nation<sup>k</sup>;" He is "given, moreover, for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people<sup>l</sup>."

<sup>h</sup> Isa. xlix. 6.<sup>i</sup> Ib. 5.<sup>j</sup> Ib. 1. 10.<sup>k</sup> Ib. xlix. 7.<sup>l</sup> Ib. lv. 4.

All these passages are clearly irreconcilable with the theory that He was also the nation, or identical with any select portion of it. And equally is the description of His office as a whole. There are, indeed, parts of the Messiah's office which His Church shares with Him : but there are others peculiar to Him ; as, for instance, that He suffers a vicarious death<sup>m</sup> ; that He makes intercession for sinners<sup>n</sup>, and for Zion<sup>o</sup> ; that He is a covenant of the people<sup>p</sup> ; and after His humiliation is worshipped by kings and princes<sup>q</sup>, restores Israel<sup>r</sup>, and is the salvation also of the Gentiles and the whole world<sup>s</sup>. In these and many more such particulars the Prophet plainly is speaking of the personal office of the Messiah ; but, above all, where He describes His sinlessness, and that He is therefore the sole Saviour : " All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way, and Jehovah hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all<sup>t</sup>." It is not merely the Gentiles who have gone astray ; " all we," God's own people, have also broken the law ; Jews as well as Gentiles, " are all under sin : " and opposite to them stands the One Man who alone was without sin ; " Who looked therefore, and there was none to help ; and wondered that there was none to uphold : therefore His own arm brought salvation unto Him ; and His fury, it upheld Him."

The minor, therefore, and secondary application of Isaiah's words to the Jewish nation, is only possible

<sup>m</sup> Isa. liii. 4—6.    <sup>n</sup> Ib. liii. 12.    <sup>o</sup> Ib. lxii. 1.    <sup>p</sup> Ib. xlix. 8.  
<sup>q</sup> Ib. 7.    <sup>r</sup> Ib. xlix. 6.    <sup>s</sup> Ib. xlii. 1, 4, 6.    <sup>t</sup> Ib. liii. 6.

at the commencement of the prophecy. Even there it does not militate against the belief that in Christ, and Christ only, the words of the Prophet find their complete fulfilment. For they belonged to Israel only as it shared in Christ's office, and prefigured it. If the servants are joined with their Master in doing His work, they must not usurp His place. Though they can bear tidings of Him, and carry His salvation to the ends of the earth, yet He alone can be the Saviour; for He alone can make satisfaction for sins. In His agony in the garden He withdrew even from His favourite disciples; and upon the cross He alone was lifted up, that He might draw all men unto Him.

Such then, in its main outlines, has been the course of Jewish thought upon this and the corresponding prophecies of their Scriptures. At first, the undoubted application of them throughout many centuries to the Messiah, but with the obstinate determination to deny His humiliation, and see in Him a triumphant Deliverer. When this proved beyond the power of argument, the endeavour was made to separate the prophecies into two portions, and assign them to different persons, to a suffering and a triumphant Messiah. In the third and last era they were explained away. To the Christian these prophecies are the source of ever-increasing confidence. The more he studies them, the more he is convinced that they are not the mere longings after a national hero; that no merely national literature could have described its expected deliverer as One "whom man despised, whom

the nation abhorred:" for so strange a phenomenon he can find no explanation, save that the "Scripture was given by inspiration of God," and that the prophets, moved by the Holy Ghost, spake of a Saviour, who "made Himself an offering for sin," and who therefore sees an ever-increasing seed in those who are adopted to be God's children, and in whose hands the pleasure of that Lord who "willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he should rather turn from his sin, and be saved," shall prosper.

## SERMON VII.

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ISAIAH liii. 4.

*“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows :  
yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and  
afflicted.”*

UPON a previous occasion, in addressing you upon that portion of Isaiah's final prophecy which is contained in the fifty-second and fifty-third chapters, I gave a slight sketch of the history of its Jewish interpretation ; and I then shewed that three distinct eras may be traced in the course of Jewish thought upon the subject, of which two were of native origin, while the third was scarcely more than an endeavour to discover some theory sufficiently specious to oppose to the arguments of Christian controversialists. In the first of these stages, commencing at a period anterior to the birth of our Lord, and continuing until some time subsequent to the Jerusalem Talmud, there was the unhesitating acknowledgment, that the Servant of Jehovah described in the last twenty-seven chapters of the Book of Isaiah, was the Messiah : but joined with it was the endeavour to separate from Him every note and mark of suffering ; so that in the Chaldee Paraphrase and other ancient authorities we find the most forced and unnatural attempts

to give some other explanation to all those words in the prophets which shewed that "it behoved Messiah to suffer<sup>a</sup>." And this theory, that the Messiah was to be merely a triumphant hero, grew out of the settled convictions of the national mind; for from the time of the return from Babylon they had kept God's covenant perfectly in matters external. Their old idolatrous tendencies had entirely ceased, and wherever they were dispersed they offered a pure and holy worship to the one true God. Nevertheless they were still oppressed; the heathen often trampled the holy city under foot, profaned their altars, and forbade their rites; and a garrison held the city of David for many years even after the triumphs of Judas Maccabeus. It followed, therefore, that the same justice of God which in old time had punished them for lapsing into idolatry, must now give them a corresponding reward; and that the heathen who persecuted them, now that they were true to the covenant, must be overtaken by a vengeance more marked and terrible than that of Nineveh and Babylon. It was a thing contrary to every feeling of their minds to suppose that they would be compensated for their sufferings by the abolition of their exclusive privileges; that the Gentiles who oppressed them would be admitted to share their covenant on equal terms; and that henceforward he was not to be a Jew who was one outwardly, nor circumcision that made in the flesh by hands. Not such thoughts nerved the Maccabees

<sup>a</sup> Luke xxiv. 46.

to their heroic struggle, but a deep, narrow, and exclusive patriotism; the firm conviction that they were the people of the covenant, were fighting God's battles, and putting His enemies to the sword. But the time had come when God's worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth; when the temporal sanctions of the covenant must be done away, and spiritual hopes substituted in their place. And many of the Jews observed the signs of the times, and accepted for a Saviour a suffering Messiah, and bore far and wide the tidings of His salvation: but not so the nation as a whole; nor could they even learn the lesson when the Romans destroyed their temple, and abolished the daily sacrifice, and no Maccabees arose for their defence, though their zeal burnt as hotly as in times of old.

But however natural might be this expectation of a triumphant Messiah, to defeat their enemies, and give them the earthly reward which they had earned, it was nevertheless too thoroughly opposed to the teaching of their sacred books to be able to endure the test of an impartial examination: and therefore in the later, or Babylonian Talmud, traces are found of an attempt to reconcile the statements of the Scriptures with their national convictions; and the theory subsequently was developed, and remained current for some centuries. According to this adaptation of the prophecies, there were to be two Messiahs, one of whom, sprung from the ten tribes, and therefore called the son of Joseph, was to be the first to call the Jews to arms; but, after a succession of victories,



and the execution of a fearful retaliation upon all Gentiles dwelling in the Holy Land, he was finally to be defeated and slain. Thereupon was to follow that mourning at Jerusalem described by the Prophet Zechariah. But this grief would be but of short duration; for Messiah-ben-David would appear, whose more successful strategy, aided by supernatural power, would quickly destroy his enemies, and enable him to found a universal empire, the offices and emoluments of which the Jews were to be called even from their graves to share.

But when, in the West, the Jews came into closer contact with Christianity, these notions could no longer be seriously entertained. Their Messiahs were at most but successful generals, with no higher aim than the prizes of victorious ambition; and in describing their battles, the Jewish doctors, with too good reason, perhaps, for bitter rancour against their persecutors, had allowed their imaginations to revel in scenes of bloodshed, and pillage, and rapine. Against such expositions the minds of their own more thoughtful people revolted, and preferred, with the Christians, to take for their Messiah One who was a lowly sufferer, and who taught His disciples to set their affection on heavenly things, and not on the things of this world. And this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was the very centre of the Christian doctrine of a Messiah saving by suffering; and many Jews, in committing to writing the reasons of their conversion to Christianity, acknowledged that it was its perusal which had shaken their faith in their old creed and teachers.

It became necessary, therefore, for their doctors to invent some new interpretation, which would both adhere more closely to the terms of the prophecy than had been the case with their allegorizing fancies of old, and also be specious enough to satisfy the minds of their own hesitating followers. But for a time their theories were not very successful : for, as the Prophet's words seemed plainly to describe a person, some thought that Uzziah was meant, because after a reign of great glory he was stricken with leprosy ; and the Prophet's word, rendered in our Version simply "stricken," would naturally suggest to a Jew the thought of this disease, because the substantive derived from the same root is the word repeatedly used in Leviticus for the mark or spot, by the discovery of which the priest's judgment was to be decided in his official examination of lepers. But as Uzziah's punishment was occasioned by his own sin, and was followed by no restoration, others explained the prophecy of Hezekiah, at the time of his sickness, supposing that the premature death which threatened him was a penalty for the sins of the nation, unworthy of so good a king ; but, being restored by the mediation of Isaiah, "he prolonged his days:" while others sought in Josiah, and Cyrus, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, resemblances which they hoped would justify them in claiming for one or other of them the honour of being Jehovah's servant. But when these theories were all met by unanswerable difficulties, they gradually came to the conclusion that the Prophet was speaking of the whole Jewish people ; whose present

exile is not, they argue, the punishment of their own sins, as was the captivity of Babylon, but a vicarious bearing of the Gentiles' sins; by the merits of which the whole world will finally be reconciled to the Jewish God, and the Gentiles admitted to share the blessings of their covenant,—though of course upon an humble and inferior footing.

These views have in the present day a twofold importance; for first it is necessary for us to know, in dealing with the Jews, what are the views which they hold. The ill-success of Christian missionaries may often be owing to their setting crudely forth their own or the popular view of some Christian doctrine, without making themselves acquainted with the state of their hearers' minds, and the arguments current among them which serve to neutralize the force of the missionary's teaching. Owing to some such fault it is that, as a general rule, in the present day Christianity makes but a slight impression upon any civilized community possessed of a literature of its own. Whether the people be Mohammedan, or Hindu, or Jew, in all cases they have a counter theory, entrenched behind which they listen to the missionary's words, and smile in themselves at what they have been taught to regard as exploded fallacies. They require for their conversion men like St. Paul, who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and knew the whole system and theory of his opponents: and until men will thus learn the real views of those whose minds they wish to influence, they must expect to find their labours very barren of results. So then of the Jews, while the Christian points to their long humiliation as the fulfil-

ment of the prophecy of Moses, and a proof that God has rejected them from being the people of His covenant, they have been taught to believe that their present affliction is not because of their own sins, but for the redemption of the world,—it is no humiliation, but an honour, of which they alone are worthy; for their sorrows are the ransom of mankind: and as soon as the ransom is complete, then will the proud Christians themselves be witnesses of their triumph, as they are “gathered from the north country, and all countries whither God has scattered them, to dwell in their own land;” and thither “shall the glory of the Gentiles come to them like a flowing river,” in countless bands of proselytes; and there, finally, “all flesh shall appear,” at the recurrence of their great festivals, “to worship before their Jehovah.”

But these views have in the present day an even greater importance in the use which has been made of them by Christian commentators. For it was impossible but that the renown gained by the critical examination of the annals of ancient Rome, and the reconstruction of its history from the disjointed materials, must lead to the same attempt being made upon Jewish history. Nor ought we either to wonder or grieve at this. It may be an evil to those minds which engage in the task, because with these Jewish records faith is also mixed up, which had no place in those old Roman histories; and possibly, in scrutinizing closely the object-matter of faith, the result may be a want of veneration in treating of those things which angels, we are told, desire to look into. But the human mind is so strangely constituted, that such a re-

sult need not necessarily be the case. Faith is so much an act of the will, and not of the understanding, that the errors of the latter do not necessarily very strongly affect the former; and orthodoxy of belief is quite separable from fervency of devotion. Certainly the writer whom I have referred to as the resuscitator of the idea that the Servant of Jehovah was the Prophet Jeremiah was a man of deep piety and earnest faith, however deficient we may consider him in soundness and calmness of judgment. But however this may be, certainly the mind of man will never be content to build its hopes upon a foundation which it has not and may not examine; and though the individual may suffer, the community must be benefited by the enquiry. For if our views—the current views—be true, they will finally be only the more firmly established by a close and searching examination into their merits, even if it be made by unfriendly hands, and with the hope of proving them to be untenable. But if our views be in part untrue,—if, as is possibly the case, there be in every age a certain amount of falseness mingled with the truth in the theories then current, as falseness is contrary to God's nature, and injurious to man's,—we have no reason to grieve, but rather the contrary, whenever we see men patiently, even if as we think over-boldly, examining into the grounds and reasons of what we hold.

The arguments, therefore, invented by the Jews for the purpose of protecting themselves against Christian controversialists, have in the last few years been closely examined by Christian writers; but no longer

for the purpose of refuting them, but in the hope of finding some scheme which may explain away the difficulties consequent upon the denial of the prophets being in an especial sense God's messengers, commissioned to reveal things future. They have been stated, therefore, with fresh circumstances, have been put into a new light, and strengthened with every argument which the most painstaking research, the minutest philological criticism, and the most exact examination into style, and manner, and matter could discover: but the result has not been satisfactory to the searchers; for no view has attained to the dignity of a current interpretation. Each enquirer has had his own theory, but has found few followers; more successful in shewing the difficulties which beset his rival's scheme, than in building up his own, he has left behind no enduring monument of much patient industry, perhaps, and learning; and if the perusal of one German commentary may shake the reader's faith in the genuineness, for instance, of Isaiah's prophecies, and the truth of their inspiration, on finding so much ingenuity and learning arrayed against them, the perusal of a fifth and sixth only fills the mind with weariness at finding in them assertions conflicting at every possible point, and the ceaseless striving after a barren novelty.

We may leave, therefore, the exact consideration of the minutiae of these theories for those whose business it is to make themselves acquainted with whatever commentators are doing or have done to elucidate or obscure the meaning of the divine records: our

time to-day will probably be more usefully spent in considering the reasons which justify us in still retaining the Messianic interpretation.

It is not my intention, however, to shew how constantly both our Lord and His Apostles refer to this prophecy, and generally to the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, in proof that the "Christ was to suffer and so to enter into His glory." Nor shall I appeal to the confessedly unanimous consent of the Fathers, both of the ancient Jewish and Christian Church, in identifying the Messiah with the Servant of Jehovah. Both these arguments have great weight, but it is the weight of authority; and though probably there are few scholars in this country who would doubt that the authority of the divine teachers of the New Testament in interpreting and explaining the Jewish Scriptures is superior in nature and degree to every other whatsoever, still it is not to authority that I at present appeal. My object rather is to shew from internal evidence that the terms of the prophecy are exactly fulfilled in our blessed Lord. In the case of all the other interpretations which have been brought forward, I have already stated what seem to me unanswerable objections and difficulties in the way of making the facts and doctrines of the prophecy agree with the explanation offered: in referring it to our Lord there are no such difficulties, but the most complete and entire agreement between the prophecy and the fulfilment adduced.

I. For first, as to the facts of the prophecy. The Servant of Jehovah is described as being sprung from

a family which had fallen from a position of grandeur into humble circumstances. "He shall grow up before Jehovah as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." Similarly in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah we were told that "He should come forth as a rod, or shoot, from the cut-down trunk of Jesse, and as a sucker from among his roots." Now nothing is more certain than that the Jews expected that the Messiah would not only be born of David's kingly line, but that His entrance into the world would be attended with great pomp and splendour. But plainly the Prophet's words describe a state of the lowest humiliation: for what stronger picture of languor and weakness could be given than that of a sucker sprung from the roots of a fallen tree, and this sucker itself under an Eastern sun scarcely finding in the parched and dried-up soil the means of nourishment? In which, then, of the many opposing explanations shall we find this first note fulfilled, that the Servant of Jehovah is to be by birth and education one unfitted for his high office? It cannot be said of Israel collectively, the seed of Abraham, Jehovah's friend: nor of any of their kings; nor of Isaiah, from his early youth a king's counsellor; nor of Jeremiah, a priest's son,—as some say, son of that high-priest, Hilkiah, who was Josiah's most active coadjutor in his reforms. But in our Lord it was fulfilled. Of the race of kings who had ruled in splendour at Jerusalem a root still lingered in poverty and obscurity among the mountains of Galilee, earning the means of subsistence by manual labour. Born in so remote a village, a car-



pen-ter's reputed son, how could He acquire the rudiments of education? "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" It was to His contemporaries the very difficulty which made them close their eyes to the evidence even of miracles, that our Lord came so humbly: their Messiah, the desire of all nations, could not be a mean carpenter's son, brought up in an obscure village, without rank, or wealth, or education, the brother of such ordinary people as James and Joses:—"and they were offended because of Him."

Yet this was the very fact foretold, that He should be a root growing out of a dry ground,—growing, that is, where naturally it was not possible for it to grow. He was to be absolutely destitute of all adventitious aids to success; nature and the world were to contribute nothing to His mission; but, in the Prophet's words elsewhere, He was to be a marvel, "a wonder<sup>b</sup>." And perhaps the literal meaning of the present passage is even more striking than the translation would lead us to expect; for though most commentators agree with our version in taking the word which it renders "tender plant" in a metaphorical sense, as a shoot or sucker, both on account of the parallelism, as it answers to "root" in the second clause, and also on account of the verb "he shall grow up;" yet elsewhere it is invariably used in its literal sense as "an unweaned child," and is so rendered in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah,—"The sucking child shall play upon the hole of the asp." Accordingly, the Septuagint renders it here also by *παιδίον*, and the Syriac

<sup>b</sup> Isa. ix. 6.

by "He hath come up as a young child before Him." The Messiah is to submit, therefore, to the infirmities of human nature; though elsewhere He be "the mighty God, the everlasting Father," yet is He also to be a child, weak, frail, helpless, dependent upon others for His support. We can divine no reason why the Prophet should tell us that Hezekiah, or Josiah, or himself, or Jeremiah, were once unweaned children: it was the greatest mystery ever enacted upon the earth when an Immanuel, an incarnate God, was born of the virgin.

In a tropical country the Prophet's metaphor would be far more suggestive of weakness than among ourselves. Vegetation there seems entirely to depend upon water; the driest stock "at the mere scent of water will bud, and bring forth boughs." Oriental imagery is therefore constantly drawn from the luxuriance of vegetation in a moist soil. By such an image the Psalmist depicts the greatness to which bad men sometimes attain: "I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself abroad like a tree growing in its own soil, and green from the abundance of its sap<sup>c</sup>." It is a metaphor the exact reverse of the Prophet's. The one sets before us the idea of a mighty tree, which has never been weakened by transplantation, but grows in its native soil with that marvellous rankness which makes vegetation in the East a wonder, wherever water is plentiful. And so do the sons of kings grow up, surrounded by splendour and magnificence, undwarfed by poverty and

<sup>c</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 35.

neglect, like stately cedars, born to rule over the meaner trees. But not so "the unweaned child" whom Isaiah describes: He is as a root in a dry ground, pinched by poverty, uncared for, living in neglect and obscurity; He is "like the heath in the desert, which seeth not the time when good cometh, but inhabiteth the parched places of the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited<sup>a</sup>." Such actually was our Lord, dwelling in a Galilæan village, the offspring of an uprooted stock, destitute of all the advantages of birth, and rank, and wealth; the advantages which from their childhood those enjoy who dwell in the homes of their ancestors, as "trees in their own soil."

And His bringing up is like His birth. "He has no form, nor comeliness: and when men see Him, there is no beauty that they should desire Him." There was nothing in Him as He grew up to attract the world's admiration: no marvellous beauty of person; no striking sprightliness of manner; nothing of that show and glitter which the multitude think so highly of. His thoughtful mother pondered indeed over His sayings, for He let fall from time to time words significative of His future calling; but they were not such words as catch the attention of the idle. Even she, when He entered upon His ministry, was so little prepared for it, that she would have dissuaded Him from it. The doctors in the temple were astonished at His understanding and answers, His meditative mind impressed them, but not so the people

<sup>a</sup> Jer. xvii. 6.

among whom He lived. By them He was regarded with kindness; for "He grew in favour with men as well as with God;" but they did not look upon Him as having anything extraordinary in His character. When, therefore, He preached in their synagogue, they had no patience with Him—were ready even to ill-treat Him; for they could see no difference between Him and Joses, and James and Simon, and Jude, His brethren.

But the Prophet does not describe Him merely as an object of neglect, the world is not merely careless about Him, and willing to leave Him in obscurity,—it despises and rejects Him. "He is despised and rejected of men,"—or rather, He submitted to be the most abject of mankind, "the despised among men;"—*ἐλάχιστος ἀνδρῶν*, as Symmachus translates it; "the most humble of mankind," as the Syriac; "novissimus hominum," as Jerome. The lot which He chose was the very lowliest,—to go about without a place where to lay His head, supported by the alms of the people. In the Psalms He says of Himself, "I am a worm, and no man:" a thing that is below man's estate; "a reproach of men, and despised of the people." He was, moreover, to be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" one who bore in more than common measure the pains and griefs of human life, and that without meeting with ordinary sympathy; for "we hid as it were our faces from Him: He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." What metaphor could more strongly picture the world's aversion to Him? Men seem to turn from

Him with involuntary abhorrence, and to hide their faces with their hands that they may spare themselves the pain of seeing Him. For literally the words signify, "As one from whom men hide their faces, so was He despised, and we esteemed Him not;" and as the word translated "grief," "acquainted with grief," primarily signifies "disease," the whole passage calls up before us the idea of one of those painful objects, afflicted with an incurable malady, who are to be met with at the gates of most Oriental towns, and from whom the traveller turns away his eyes with involuntary aversion and disgust.

We are not, indeed, to take these words literally; from too literal an interpretation the Jews drew that picture of the Messiah which I have referred to before, sitting amidst a crowd of lepers at the gates of Rome. Really, the Prophet is using metaphors, as above, where he described the Messiah as being a root. It is not even a necessary inference that our Lord was remarkable for personal uncomeliness: rather the Prophet intended, by the use of these forcible images, to stamp the idea of a lowly, meek, and patient sufferer upon our minds. He describes the Saviour, therefore, as submitting to the extremity of bodily humiliation; but by this simile he rather intended us to understand those mental agonies which the Messiah bore, as being the appointed sacrifice for sin. It is a picture of the utmost sorrow, of the cup of anguish full to the brim; and may well, therefore, call up to our minds the remembrance of that struggle in the garden when He even shrank from the awful conflict before Him. And

if the words of the prophecy are too great and forcible for any human and earthly trouble, they the more suitably apply to Him, whose humiliation for man's sake is deepened by the contrast with the glory which He had as God from before the world began.

But the narrative of Messiah's sufferings is not yet complete. He is also the victim of violence and cruelty. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; yet He opened not His mouth: as a lamb He is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep is dumb before her shearers, so He opened not His mouth." It is the account of One whose life of ill-treatment ends in an unresisting death; and in the words there is suggested to us the idea of sacrifice,—of a lamb led to the altar,—“the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world,” as it is paraphrased by the Baptist. And as it was a good omen that the victim should advance joyous and unresisting to the sacrifice, so did our Lord stand silent in Pilate's judgment-hall: to Herod He answered never a word; He refuted no accusations, explained away no unjust suspicions, did not protest His innocence. Such unusual conduct astonished even the Governor: for “he marvelled greatly.”

But His humiliation draws now to a close; for in the next verse we read that “He was taken from prison and from judgment.” For this rendering, “prison,” there is little or no authority; but we find, as is so often the case, in the margin, a more faithful translation of the original words, “He was taken away by distress, and judgment.” But, as is well known, from the infrequency of adjectives in the Semitic

dialects, various periphrases have to be used to express their force; and thus "by distress and judgment" means, according to our idiom, "by a distressing judgment;" or, as the original might more exactly be translated "by oppression and by judgment," it means an "oppressive, an unjust judgment." The Servant, therefore, of Jehovah, is led unresisting to death, in obedience to an unjust sentence,—a sentence such as tyrants and oppressors pass. Of whom speaketh the Prophet this? Many even of the Jews have felt that the words could apply only to one who had suffered martyrdom, and have thought therefore that Isaiah meant one Akiba, or Aquila, who perished in the wars against Rome. But this martyr was but a fabulous person; nor even if he had really existed, would it be true of him that "he prolonged his days," or fulfilled the rest of the prophecy. But no words could more exactly describe our Lord's condemnation, when the very judge protested his victim's innocence, and publicly washed his hands before the people as a disavowal of the sentence, which nevertheless he passed, because to his tyrannical nature it was a less evil that one just man should die than that the festival at which he came to preside should be disturbed by the violence of the mob.

The right interpretation of the next sentence, "Who shall declare his generation?" has been much disputed; but that which is most generally received makes it an ejaculation of horror on the part of the Prophet at the greatness of the sin committed by Christ's contemporaries:—"Who can describe the men

of that generation, or their crime, without a parallel in the world's history?" "For He was cut off from the land of the living!" It was the slaughter of Jehovah's Servant which made their wickedness so much greater than that of other men, when they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." But even of their general wickedness the historian of their wars bears this remarkable testimony,—"I deem it, that if the Romans had delayed to come against these wretches, the city would have been swallowed up by an earthquake, or overwhelmed by a deluge, or experienced the same fate as Sodom: for it bore a more impious generation than those which suffered such things<sup>e</sup>."

The account of the Messiah's death is followed by one of those statements, which were necessarily unintelligible until they were fulfilled, and which not unfrequently occur in the prophetic records:—"And they appointed His burial to be with the wicked, but He was with the rich after His death." According to the ordinary treatment of those condemned to death, His body would have shared the same ignominious fate as those of the malefactors between whom He was crucified; or had it been surrendered to the Jews, their law was that the body of a blasphemer, after being exposed for several days to public disgrace, should finally be buried in secret. The courage of one man prevented our Lord's body from meeting with the slightest contumely; on the contrary, from the moment when Joseph of Arimathæa went in boldly and begged it

<sup>e</sup> Jos., *Bell. Jud.*, v. 13. 6.



of the Governor, it was tended with the most reverent love, and was laid in the rich man's grave. I may add that the word rendered in our version "he made," literally signifies "gave," and is used impersonally, "one gave," that is, "they gave," "they appointed;" the nominative not being expressed, to shew that according to the ordinary course of events His burial would have been with the wicked, in the common malefactor's grave. But the same Providence which watched over His body upon the cross, and ordained that "no bone of it should be broken," ordained also that every earthly mark of respect should attend it in its burial.

II. Thus far there is noticeable a close and obvious agreement between the terms of the prophecy and the facts of our Lord's life and death. But there are also doctrinal statements applicable to no one but our Lord; for the Prophet in the strongest terms declares the general sinfulness of man, the complete innocence of the victim, and that what He bore was the punishment of the iniquity of others. Of men he says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." And if this was true of the Jews, the people of God's covenant, more true was it of the heathen, who were aliens from God. All men, then, had wandered like sheep,—the most roving of all animals,—from God's ways; not all into the same sins, nor all sinners in the same degree, but all with sins of their own to answer for. Jehovah's Servant alone does not share in this general sinfulness, but, on

the contrary, makes atonement for others. "Surely He hath borne our diseases, and carried our sorrows: but we did esteem Him leprous, smitten of God, and afflicted."

St. Matthew quotes this verse in its lower application, of the healing of the sick by our Lord's miraculous powers:—"He healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." But this lower and secondary fulfilment does not militate against its higher accomplishment in the propitiatory sacrifice which Christ offered for man's pardon. Among the Jews the ideas of sickness and sin were inseparably connected; it was the sin of Adam which had brought death, and with it sickness into the world; and in the prophets, the words expressive of sickness and disease are so constantly used for sin, as almost to cease to be metaphorical. In the New Testament the same thought is present in the words with which our Lord healed the sick of the palsy,—“Thy sins be forgiven thee.”

“To bear our diseases,” therefore, is “to bear our sins;” or, in other words, to be answerable for them. In the Mosaic Law the phrase constantly occurs, of a man bearing his sin in the sense of being liable to the fixed legal punishment for it. But there are two places especially which may serve to explain the Prophet's meaning: for, first, we find Moses saying to Eleazar and Ithamar, the priests, the sons of Aaron, “God hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congrega-

tion, to make atonement for them before the Lord<sup>f</sup> ;” and, secondly, Aaron is “to lay his hands upon the head of the scapegoat, and confess over him all the sins of the children of Israel, and send him away into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities<sup>g</sup>.” Now both these types were fulfilled in our Lord. We see in Him both the victim, who, in His own Person, bears the guilt of His people; and also the High-Priest, who, by the merits of His own blood, makes atonement for them.

But though thus it was the sins of others which He bore, yet “We,” says the Prophet, “esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” The words all imply some such punishment as comes directly from God; and the first is chiefly used of the leprosy, a disease which the Jews regarded as so entirely of divine infliction, that no attempt was ever made to heal it. The whole passage, moreover, plainly shews that He who was thus stricken could neither be the Jewish nation as a whole, nor the prophetic order, as the more worthy portion of it. For those in whose name Isaiah speaks acknowledge their error: they had imagined that the great sorrows which the Servant of Jehovah bore were the results of His own sin, a punishment sent by God as the merited chastisement of His own ill deserts; they now in the most unqualified terms protest His innocence, and declare that He was bearing the chastisement due to themselves. Who then are they in whose name the Prophet makes this confession? Or can it be any other than his own nation primarily, and then all mankind,

<sup>f</sup> Lev. x. 17.

<sup>g</sup> Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

as they learn to feel their own sinfulness, and find in the Messiah one who bore their chastisement? On the other hand, the Jewish people could not be the Servant of Jehovah; for He is acknowledged innocent, but the Prophet constantly accuses them of wickedness: these last twenty-seven chapters are full of indignant denunciations of their crimes. Nor, again, could it be the prophetic order; for though, doubtless, it was free from the worst faults of the nation, still it could neither be pronounced absolutely innocent, like Jehovah's Servant, nor equal to the task of bearing the sins of others. The sole explanation, therefore, which remains is, that the confession belongs to those primarily who, at the preaching of the Apostles, learnt to regard as their Saviour Him whom they had pierced: and subsequently, to all in every place and age who are brought to acknowledge their sinfulness, and find in Christ one by whose sufferings they may procure peace.

For so the Prophet proceeds. "He was pierced through for our sins, and bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we have been healed." There is probably in these words a reference to the crucifixion, when our Lord's side was pierced by the spear; and as the word has an intensive meaning, "pierced through and through," it is even in some versions, as in the Syriac, rendered "slain." But the main object of the Prophet rather was to express the intensity of the sufferings which the Messiah bore in obtaining pardon for His people's sins. He says, therefore, that He was pierced through and through for our transgres-

sions; and bruised, or rather crushed, ground down, for our iniquities. In other words, the sufferings of Christ were not imaginary, or slight, but real and intense, and such as while procuring for us reconciliation with God, might also serve to convince us of the hatefulness of sin in God's sight, when its pardon could be obtained only by so terrible a penalty. But Christ having paid this penalty, has procured for us peace with God; we have been healed by His stripes, and restored in things spiritual to a state of health and soundness.

But having thus borne the punishment of sins, of which He was not guilty, the Servant of Jehovah is finally to obtain a commensurate reward. And this reward is doubly described,—first in the words of God Himself, at the end of the fifty-second chapter, and more fully again in the fifty-third. In the first place we read, “My servant shall deal prudently;” or as it may possibly mean, “shall prosper: He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. In proportion as many have been astonished because of Thee,—so marred was His aspect that it was scarcely human, and His form so abject that it was scarcely that of a man,—so shall they be astonished at His exaltation, when He shall sanctify many nations, and kings shall close their mouths in awe at His presence. For (though they are Gentiles, yet) they shall see things such as neither tradition of old nor their wise men had told them, and shall understand truths such as they had never before heard.” Surely when in these words the Prophet describes the joy with which

the Gentiles, as represented by their kings, shall receive the tidings of Jehovah's Servant, he gives himself the key to the meaning of that triumphant march of the exiles from Babylon, and return to the holy city, which immediately precedes this prophecy; and explains to us what are the news brought by that herald, who from Judæa's mountain-tops publishes peace. It was no messenger sent forward by Ezra, but the apostles and preachers of Christianity, whom the Prophet describes in these words,—“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth a gospel, that publisheth peace; that bringeth a gospel of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

We have no less an authority than St. Paul for applying to the calling of the Gentiles the last words of the fifty-second chapter,—“Kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them, they shall see.” For in Rom. xv. 21, in speaking of their admission into the Church, he quotes these very words,—“To whom He was not spoken of they shall see, and they that have not heard shall understand.” And that by sprinkling the nations the Prophet means that Messiah shall consecrate, and sanctify, and devote them to God, we conclude from the fact that sprinkling was the form by which the priests were hallowed and consecrated to their office. For so we read,—“Thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him:

and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his son's garments with him<sup>h</sup>." So, also, of the goat of the sin-offering we read,—“The priest shall sprinkle of the blood upon the altar with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel<sup>i</sup>.” But thus “to sprinkle many nations” with blood, and make them the willing servants of Jehovah, consecrated to His service, is no light office; not one that we may, as a trifling matter, apply to some Jewish king, or prophet, or the Jewish people generally: rather it is the office of one who is especially God's High-Priest, and whom the high-priests of old did but typify; who by the merits of His one perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, made an atonement for the sins of all mankind.

In the tenth verse of the fifty-third chapter the Prophet in his own person, or rather in the name of the people, reverts to the subject of Messiah's exaltation. “But it was Jehovah's will to bruise Him: He smote Him unto death. If He make Himself an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and Jehovah's pleasure shall prosper in His hand.” It follows, therefore, that the humiliation of Jehovah's Servant was part of the divine plan, and was necessary for the accomplishment of God's counsel; it does not mean that Jehovah had any pleasure in His Servant's sufferings as such,—that what He endured was in itself a satisfaction to Him; what it shews us is, that there was a divine purpose

<sup>h</sup> Exod. xxix. 21.

<sup>i</sup> Lev. xvi. 19.

to be accomplished in Messiah thus becoming a “man of sorrows.” And the next clause explains the nature of this purpose,—“If He make Himself an offering for sin.” In the Authorized Version the verb is taken in the second person singular,—“When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin;” but in the margin we find the construction now more commonly received, “When His soul shall make an offering.” As the word rendered “soul” means, however, simply “self,” the sense is, “If He shall Himself make an offering for sin:” but most modern commentators consider that the word “Himself” is again to be supplied, and that the right rendering finally is, “If He shall Himself make Himself an offering for sin.” And this interpretation, which is most in accordance with the principles of Hebrew grammar, is exactly what St. Paul says of our Lord in his Epistle to the Ephesians,—“Christ gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God.”

Upon this immediately follows—as the same Apostle declares to the Philippians—Messiah’s exaltation, which the Prophet describes in three particulars. For, first, His sorrows shall not be in vain, for “He shall see His seed.” Not as the Jews supposed, in a line of natural descendants, succeeding Him in an earthly crown, the prize of war and battle; but in a Church, the members of which are adopted into God’s family, and being “led by the Spirit of God, are made thereby His sons.” And next, “He shall prolong His days.” In these words we have, again, one of the contradictions of prophecy: for how could one prolong



his days who was "pierced through and through," was "cut off from the land of the living;" "whose burial was appointed to be with the wicked, but who was with the rich after His death?" How in the same one verse could the Prophet declare that "it was Jehovah's will to smite His Servant unto death," and that nevertheless "He should prolong His days?" But in our Lord these words, so apparently impossible, proved doubly true. They proved true in fact; for He arose from the grave, and after a short sojourn on earth ascended into heaven, in that same human body in which He had suffered, and which, human still though transfigured and glorified, is even now united with Him at God's right hand: and they proved true in spirit; for, "lo! I am with you always," He says, "even unto the end of the world." And lastly, the counsel of God in man's restoration shall "prosper in His hands:" prosper, perhaps, not exactly in the way that we should wish, or that human counsels would propose; but in the way which really is in accordance with God's final purpose when He created the world, and peopled it with a race of beings endowed with free-will, and subject to a real probation, for which the presence of evil is a necessary condition. But of this purpose we are not judges: we do not possess sufficient knowledge, either of the end or of the means, to be able to form any probable opinion. "God has shewn thee, O man, what to do," but He has not made thee His counsellor, nor acquainted thee with His purposes. There is everything revealed in Holy Scripture necessary for a life here of holiness, to God's

glory, and our own salvation; but of the many current opinions respecting the mysteries of our nature and the unseen world, which we hold besides, some are probable, some barely possible, but few have any certain warrant in Holy Writ. We can feel that a probation is going on: why we should be subject to it, or why it should be so difficult, we cannot tell. But we may firmly believe that it is for our real good, and that the counsel of the Almighty in the incarnation of the Son does "prosper in His hands."

In the two remaining verses, God in person confirms the assertion of the Prophet that the Messiah's sufferings shall not be in vain. "Because of His own labours shall He see the reward: by His knowledge shall My Servant, as being the Righteous One, justify many: for He shall bear their iniquities." In this passage many consider that the expression "by His knowledge" means that Christ will justify many by their being taught the truth as it is in Him, and so attaining to the knowledge of Him in His various offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; but the connection of ideas rather seems to require the more obvious meaning, that Christ's work of justification is rendered possible by His having wisely executed the Father's counsels. It carries back the mind to the opening words, "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently,"—well, that is, and wisely; and with it suggests the mystery, that our Lord, though free from all taint and possibility of sin, yet in His human nature underwent some probation: "was tempted in all points like as we are;" could be encouraged by

hope, in that "for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame;" and was capable of reward, "for God, we read, hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." It is also to be noticed, that the word "righteous" holds a position contrary to the usual rules of Hebrew syntax, but which serves very plainly to mark the especial purity and sinlessness of Jehovah's Servant. For the words are not "My righteous Servant," but "the Righteous One, My Servant," as if to signify that Messiah's bearing the iniquities of mankind was only possible by reason of His being "the Righteous One," one possessed of perfect and spotless innocency.

In the concluding verse, the rewards which Jehovah bestows upon His Servant are described under metaphors taken from war and conquest:—"Therefore will I give Him many for His portion: and He shall divide the mighty as a prey." In these words we have the promise repeated that the Messiah is Jehovah's Servant not for the Jew only, but for all mankind, "to be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth." It is no local Church which He comes to found, but one which in due time shall embrace all nations within its fold: for in the Psalmist's words, "God will give unto His Christ the heathen for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession." And the reason of this universal empire follows,—the same reason which St. Paul gave the Philippians in the corresponding passage, in which he explained to them Christ's exaltation: that "Every tongue shall confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord," "because He laid Himself bare unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

In examining this portion of Holy Writ thus, verse by verse, it is impossible not to feel that the doctrines which it contains agree even more exactly than the facts themselves, were that possible, with the truths of Christianity. We may, in fact, even say that Isaiah's words have, in all ages, been accepted by the Church as the authoritative explanation of the nature of our Lord's sacrifice upon the Cross; and the Apostles themselves, when treating of its efficacy, ever refer more or less directly to them. The prophecy is the foundation therefore upon which the doctrine of the Atonement is built: and as it thus becomes the chief and most important of all the prophetic writings, we may well rejoice that it is also the most plain, and that it commends itself to the understanding by the clearness of its predictions, by the impossibility of referring them to any king or prophet, or the Jewish nation, and by their exact fulfilment in Christ only, quite as much as it does to the conscience by revealing to it a Saviour who has made atonement for sins, and by the merit of whose sacrifice the guilty may obtain pardon and peace.

## SERMON VIII.

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ISAIAH lxxv. 17.

*“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”*

THE main topic of which Isaiah treats in the third and concluding portion of his last great prophecy is the substitution of the Christian in the place of the Jewish Church. In the two previous sections this truth had been alluded to, and the principles stated upon which it rests; but in them it held a subordinate place, while now it is foremost in the Prophet's mind. As I have observed before, the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah do not follow any strictly regular plan, and though there is a progress in them, and in each section one subject holds a more prominent place than the rest, yet there is no regular development of ideas, but the same thoughts continually recur. They grow indeed more clear and definite as we proceed, but they are not treated by the Prophet in the way of premisses and their consequences, of causes and their effects, but as great and leading truths, which he illustrates and enforces in a variety of manners.

Really we may say that the Prophet throughout is occupied with but one great theme; for in this his final prophecy his mission was to prepare the minds

of his countrymen for the abolition of their national existence, and the development of their local Church into a Church universal. But for this enlargement of their covenant, a necessary condition was the fulfilment of the promise made to them of a Messiah. Their office had been to prepare for His coming: He was to be sprung from their kings, born in their country, brought up in their company, and was to found His dispensation upon a broad and spiritual interpretation of their law. Judaism was not to be destroyed by Him; no tittle of the law was to fail; on the contrary, it was to be fulfilled and perfected. But upon His appearing, all that was merely preparatory would become obsolete, and pass away; everything local and temporary, and symbolical, would cease to have a place in the divine institutions, because its purpose had been accomplished. The existence, therefore, of their national polity, their possession of their country, the maintenance of their religious services, their temple and city, and the like, would no longer have a use or meaning. They had been types and outlines of the complete and final revelation of God's will to mankind, and when the Messiah came, and declared the way of salvation, it was impossible for them to maintain a separate and distinct existence from that which was really their own full growth and perfection.

The merging therefore of the Jewish into the Christian Church is Isaiah's real subject throughout; but in the several sections it naturally divides itself into three main arguments. Thus, in the first nine chap-

ters the Prophet largely insists upon Israel's duty, as being for the time God's Church, to bear witness to the unity of the divine nature. Its great office in preparing for Christianity was to testify to there being but one God, in opposition to the motley deities of the heathen. The Apostles of Christ would reveal still deeper mysteries of the divine nature, as it is manifested in a Trinity of Persons; but the absolute unity of the Godhead is the central truth of all spiritual religion, and Israel was required to proclaim this truth. It was, indeed, a truth in abeyance, so to speak, till Christ came: the Jews gave but an unwilling assent to it; the æsthetic and sensuous rites of polytheism had too great a charm for the imaginations of men, over whom nature still exerted a power superior to reason, for them heartily to embrace a doctrine which seemed to put God so far from them. It is only as He is brought near to man in Jesus Christ by the Spirit that they can willingly endure so spiritual a truth; but it is the basis of all reasonable religion, and therefore the earnestness with which Isaiah pressed it upon the Church in his day: hence also the justification of the special providence which watched over the Jews as the depositaries of this truth, and of which one of the most remarkable exemplifications was to be the coming deliverance of the exiles from Babylon by the intervention of Cyrus.

But this deliverance of the Jewish nation from captivity, for the sake of the Jewish Church, of whose existence it was for the time a necessary condition, was but an illustration of the manner in which God

rules the world for higher and moral purposes; and the Prophet returns to his main purpose in describing the character and office of that Servant of Jehovah, by whom God's counsels in the redemption of mankind were to be accomplished. And in Him we have the point of junction between the Jewish and the Christian Church. Whatever the former possessed in type and shadow, it possessed simply as preparing the way for the Messiah's coming; at His advent it entered into a new stage, for all the promises made to it were fulfilled, and it abandoned its former symbolical, waiting, imperfect state for ever. In the first section Isaiah had repeatedly described Jehovah's Servant, but not with that unity of idea which marks this second portion of the prophecy. For sometimes he had so spoken of Him that the words best harmonize with Israel, the Church before the nativity; at another, they belong to the office of the Church now; while at another, they suit Him only who is the Church's Head. But in the second part the Servant of Jehovah appears strictly in His personal character, with not a word which suits either the Jewish or the Christian Church. He grows up as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground, is born in a mean place, and brought up in obscurity; in His life He is the man of sorrows, and in His death He bears our sins and carries our griefs. In the third section the Servant of Jehovah is never again expressly mentioned: there are, indeed, allusions to Him, as in the passage read by our Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth; but the Prophet is now occupied



with the results of Messiah's sacrifice in the founding of a universal Church, in which the blessings bestowed upon the Jew in promise only, and type and symbol, are granted in full measure; and which therefore, as not being a mere preparatory Church, nor serving for a mere temporary purpose, but as the depository of God's final revelation to man, will be eternal. And to this Church of Christ belong the metaphors contained in the text, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former," the Jewish Church, "shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."

As the Jewish and Christian Churches represent the same one divine institution in different stages of its development, they naturally are closely interwoven in the Prophet's mind, and thus many of the arguments used in this portion of his discourse are found also in the first nine chapters. The circumstances under which the two dispensations existed were different, but their essence was the same. As revelation was incomplete in the Jewish Church, her institutions, as embodying only partial truth, were necessarily imperfect, and of temporary duration. But as the full measure of divine truth required by man has now been vouchsafed, the Church henceforward assumes, as the Prophet tells us, a permanent character, and its institutions are not liable to further change. Of course, knowledge is now but in part; but that is so because of the infirmity of our nature. Necessarily it is limited by our powers; but we have all truth requisite for our probation, and, however weak and childish our ideas may really be of spiritual things,

they are all that is possible for us in our present state ; and we have no warrant for expecting that God will ever in this world bestow upon us any further revelation, or that we can attain to any higher truth, except so far as we can gain it practically by acting upon what we already possess.

As thus, then, there is a real identity of subject in the three sections of the prophecy, we may not unreasonably expect to find the same great truths insisted upon in the earlier portions as are more fully declared in the last. Accordingly, in the forty-third chapter, we read the promise of God's constant love and kindness to His Church,—“ When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. . . Since thou wast precious in My sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.” But the Jewish Church was not thus honourable for her intrinsic merits, she had been chosen for a definite purpose ; “ God,” we read, “ had created her for His glory, and formed her ;” and just as the workman shapes his instruments, not for their own sakes, but for some further use, so God had fashioned the Jewish Church to execute a certain special work in the fulfilment of the divine counsels. “ This people,” He says, “ I have formed for Myself ; they shall shew forth My praise.” Nor does the Prophet leave us in doubt of one great purpose of Israel's calling :—“ Ye are My witnesses, saith Jehovah, that I am God.”

In the earlier portion of the prophecy Isaiah deduces from his premisses a lesson of consolation. Formed for a special purpose, Israel's national existence stood upon a different basis from that of other kingdoms. We may indeed feel sure of all God's works that they have a purpose, and that every nation and people serves some allotted use ; but often we cannot tell what that purpose is. Even when a nation has completed its term of existence, and we can view its history as a whole, it is more frequently from the imagination than the reason that men conclude what was the exact place it held in the divine economy. There have been nations which have exerted a dominant influence for good or evil upon the course of human thought, and have affected the destinies of the world : there may be nations which hold a similar place now. But most nations, like most individuals, play so inferior a part upon the world's stage, that they seem to have no higher destiny than to work out in obscurity their own probation. And even in the greatest nations, while they are still darkly executing their mission, their purpose and calling is generally so indefinite, that their duration and future history is a matter of the utmost uncertainty. The rapidity of their upgrowth, the exact time of their culmination, the period of their decay and fall,—all alike are beyond the reach of human calculation. Who would have imagined that Grecian history would have ceased with Alexander's conquests, and that from this period of her greatest extension her fortunes would no longer have any interest for the world !

Far different was the case with the Jews. Not only had they a purpose, but that purpose had been authoritatively declared by revelation, and, as such, was the guarantee of their national existence. Given to them first in the promise that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, it had subsequently been embodied in the institutions both of their civil and religious law; and consequently the Aaronic priesthood and temple service, and with them their nation and polity, had become matters of necessity until the promised Seed came. The prophecy, therefore, of Jacob, that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh came," contained a truth which necessarily followed from the relation in which Israel stood to God. For Shiloh's sake it had been set apart from all nations; till His coming its office would last; but when He came, its mission would be over. And to this certainty, that Judæa must remain an independent nation until Messiah came, Isaiah constantly appeals, as affording the surest ground for comfort during the many troubles which befel the people in his days.

By separating themselves from the house of David, to which the promise had subsequently been limited by prophecy, the ten tribes cut themselves off from sharing in this guarantee. Though as individuals they might still enjoy the blessings of the Mosaic covenant, yet nationally they had reduced themselves to the same level as Edom, or Moab, or any of the other neighbouring tribes; and however closely they might imitate at Bethel the sacrifices at Jerusalem,

in God's sight it was but idolatry—the worship of a golden calf. For as their sacrifices were not the appointed symbols of the one true Sacrifice, in due time to be offered upon the cross, they were an abomination, just as much as the sacrifices offered by the heathen. When, then, they were removed from their land, there was no restoration in store for them; they maintained no separate existence in the countries whither they were carried, but were merged among the general population. From the erroneous supposition, that the descendants of Jacob possessed an intrinsic merit independent of the purpose to which God had called them, many have imagined that the ten tribes would still be found somewhere as a distinct people; but their enthusiastic enquiries have failed in discovering them. Really, by parity of reason, as Esau by selling his birthright forfeited all share in the covenant of Abraham, so did the ten tribes, by forsaking the Mosaic law, cut themselves off from the possession of the promises. They fell back into the position of the Edomites, and all that we can expect is that so very remarkable a people may have left traces of their features, and character, and customs, in the districts to which they were removed.

But further, this chapter, the forty-third, gives the first indications of the truth so fully declared in the last nine chapters, that the lineal Israel shall be rejected. The Prophet accuses them of having broken the covenant between them and Jehovah. They had been weary of God, and neglected even the ceremonial law, and had made God to serve with their sins: and

so great was their moral depravity, that the Prophet elsewhere declares that even the fulfilling on their part of the ritual law would be hateful in God's sight\*. Even as regards the great truth of God's unity, of which Israel was the appointed witness, it is plain that they did not hold it, but that idolatry was openly and generally practised in Jerusalem and the surrounding districts, in spite of the example and zealous efforts of Hezekiah to suppress it. Even at court a party daily increasing in influence was in its favour, and was supported by the authority of Manasseh, upon whose accession to the throne it gained the entire preponderance, and succeeded in reversing the whole policy of Hezekiah's reign, and in openly establishing the worship of Moloch in Jerusalem.

Joined, therefore, with promises of mercy, we read also of Israel's doom; her doom as a nation, and not as a Church:—"Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against Me; therefore I have profaned the princes of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches." Her chiefs, and teachers, and rulers had been faithless to the covenant, and therefore all that belonged to her nationally,—her glorious temple, her magnificent ritual, the ministering priests who were the princes of her sanctuary,—are profaned; become, that is, common, with no special privileges, no sanctity in God's sight: and Jacob, which had once been the inheritor of the blessing, falls under a curse, and is rejected because it had rejected Christ; and Israel, once so

\* Isa. i. 11—15.

highly favoured among nations, must henceforward, in the words of another prophet, "be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither God will drive them <sup>b</sup>."

In the second nine chapters we meet again with the same subject, — the rejection of the Jews as a nation, and the development of Judaism into the Christian Church; only it is now more directly connected with the calling of the Gentiles. Already, in the fifty-third chapter, we have the general promise that the Messiah's work shall not be in vain: "He shall see His seed;" "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied;" "He shall justify many." But in the fifty-fourth chapter, in which the Church is summoned to rejoice in her Redeemer's victory, the subject is more fully set forth. For in addressing her the Prophet distinguishes her two great stages, describing her as she existed under the Mosaic economy, as a married wife, but barren; while the Gentiles were as a wife forsaken and desolate, but upon which the pleasure of God is about again to rest, as she is gathered unto Him in Christ. And in this ingathering of the Gentiles the Jews are summoned to rejoice. It is the barren wife who is commanded to break forth into singing; their Church, that is, so destitute of spiritual life, so barren of holy men. But they shall be so no longer; for the apostles of the Lord, and the devout Jews, gathered from every land of the dispersion to Jerusalem at Pentecost, shall so

<sup>b</sup> Jer. xxiv. 9.

earnestly labour in spreading the knowledge of the truth, that "she shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and her seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." And thenceforward the Church shall no more be reproached for her unfruitfulness; for "more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith Jehovah."

Elsewhere, in the last section, the Prophet returns to this metaphor, but there it is the Jewish Church which is called Azubah, the forsaken one; for when she was childless, when all God's mercies to her were barren of results, her privileges unused, and but few who learnt from her law to lead holy lives, God was as a husband estranged from her: but when the truth went forth from Jerusalem, and Jewish lips could say that "their sound had gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world," her name was changed to Hephzibah, one, that is, in whom her husband had pleasure, and her land was called Beulah, married, "for the Lord delighted in her, and her land was married."

In the fifty-fourth chapter she is spoken of in similar terms, as "a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, the wife indeed of her husband's youth, but now refused." When, therefore, she is called upon to rejoice in the numerous offspring of the wife once desolate, it is because there can be no rivalry between the two Churches. The Gentile world had been indeed as a desolate woman, left, without any special revelation, to the dim obscurity of natural religion,



and the fading vestiges of tradition; but when it heard the summons to faith borne to it by Jewish messengers, it was into the Jewish Church that it was gathered, and admitted to the participation of privileges which the Jew had long enjoyed. We must remember that the Prophet's words are simply metaphors, and that while a contrast is possible between the Jewish Church, the barren wife of God's youth, and the Gentile world, a woman desolate and forsaken, there is no contrast possible between the two as they become the one Christian Church; and the elder Church, in gathering unto her the desolate Gentile world, may well rejoice that she thereby gains new life, and strength, and vigour, and becomes the spiritual mother of a numerous progeny. It is true that in thus enlarging the bounds of her habitation she must abandon all that was local, and temporary, and distinctively Jewish in her law; that she must adapt herself to a wider and nobler sphere, and cast off the trammels and imperfections of a mere preparatory stage. But for this the prophets constantly had endeavoured to prepare the Jewish mind. The fasts and festivals, the sacrifices and offerings, the rites and observances of the Mosaic ritual, were more frequently treated by them with disdain, than with approval. With one voice they warned the people that God's law did not consist in these things. It was its moral precepts which they pressed home to the conscience: that God's fast is to unloose the bands of wickedness; that His will is that men should do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with Him. And these and

the like lessons they enforced by explaining the spiritual meaning of the divine ordinances, shewing that the true sacrifices are those of righteousness, and that God's dwelling is not a temple made with hands, but the man who is of a meek and contrite spirit.

These portions of the law are not abrogated: all that the prophets valued, and taught the people to value, is eternal as He who gave it; and we still possess it, by virtue of being that same Church to which God of old revealed His will. At the most holy rite of our religion we recite its moral precepts; and its truths, separated from all temporary and local admixture, are the subject of our creeds and articles. Our faith is the Jewish faith, not indeed as it was a growing light up to the time of the Messiah's advent, but as the full mid-day light, with every truth clearly revealed which of old had been veiled in type and symbol. There is therefore nothing wonderful in the Jewish Church rejoicing over the multitude of her Gentile sons. The Jewish nation may grieve; for it had separated itself from the Jewish Church, and had framed the vain conceit of universal empire, and of a vassal world bowing at its feet. Instead of this, it is the Jewish Church which has embraced the Gentiles within its ample folds. By the mouth of Jewish fishermen we were summoned to receive her faith, and accept as our Saviour her Messiah. The promise which had been the consolation of her forefathers is the foundation of our hopes. The Messiah for whose advent she had longed is the Christ whom we worship. And everywhere as the Apostles

went with their message from land to land, they first addressed themselves to the Jews, and round the little knot of believing Jews the more numerous Gentile converts gathered. The Jews accepted no new creed, they went not out to join the Gentiles, they did not abandon their religion; but on the contrary, searched their own sacred books for the proof whether the Apostles' words were so. The world, therefore, classed Jew and Christian together, and rightly so. For the new converts adopted the habits of the Jews who were their fathers in the faith; they modelled their worship upon the customs and forms of the synagogue; the Old Testament, especially in its didactic portions, became the rule of their life, and in their deaths they followed the mode of Jewish sepulture. To this day we retain the Jewish habit of asking a blessing upon our meals, and the custom so long universal of writing "In peace" upon the sepulchres of the dead was borrowed from their immemorial practice. The great question of the early Church was the extent of subjection due to the Jewish law; not whether its real and deeper truths, but whether also its symbolic rites and burdensome ceremonies, were of eternal obligation. And when the Church assembled at Jerusalem solemnly to debate this weighty matter, no Gentile was present in their conclave. It was the Jew who authoritatively decided that the positive enactments of the law were binding only until Christ came; and the Apostle who laboured most earnestly in separating what had merely been preparatory from what was eternal and immutable, was "of the stock of Israel, of

the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; and as touching the law a Pharisee.”

In the early Church there was never any doubt about the obligation of keeping the Jewish law. The works of their writers abound with quotations from it, and generally from the Old Testament Scriptures, to a far greater extent than would be usual with similar writings in the present day; and, to state the case in their own words, the law was binding upon Jew and Gentile alike. It was the Deuteronomy, the second law, the law made harder and more burdensome because of the idolatry practised while Moses was in the holy mount,—it was this which it was a sin in Christians to keep. “The original law,” we read, “was that which the Lord God spake before the people made the calf, and worshipped idols, and it consisted of ten commandments and judgments. But after they served idols, justly God laid upon them such bonds as they deserved. But beware that thou lay them not on thee: for the Saviour came chiefly that He might fulfil the law, and loose us from the bonds of the second law<sup>c</sup>.” And ever has the Church retained all that was essential in Judaism. We still daily read their Scriptures, and make them, with the words of our Lord and His Apostles, our joint rule of life; their psalms each month are recited in our services; we still keep one day in seven as our day of rest, but no longer is it a bondage, but has been made, by the higher motives of Christianity, subservient to our moral and spiritual good; and still do we observe

<sup>c</sup> *Didascalia Apost. Syr.*, ed. Lagarde, p. 5.

three great festivals, though no longer in honour of earthly deliverances, and of God's goodness in the natural world, but in grateful remembrance of the chief acts of our redemption by Christ.

But everything which belonged to the Jews as a nation, both in their civil institutions and in their Church establishment, as it has no longer any use or meaning, has ceased to exist. Of these enactments many had no higher object than to keep the people from contact with the heathen nations round; many belonged only to their political and social life; while others more or less directly typified the sacrifice of Christ. The object, therefore, of these statutes was to provide for the existence of the chosen people, to whose keeping the promise of a Saviour had been entrusted, and to embody that promise in such institutions as might serve to keep it ever prominently before their view. But the essence of the law consisted in the promise itself, and those accompanying truths which are generally necessary for salvation. This was the real inheritance of the Jewish Church, and this we now possess; only these truths have been more clearly set forth, and their meaning and obligation more fully shewn, in the final revelation of the Gospel. And if in matters indifferent the Church has retained many Jewish customs, it has only been because of their usefulness, and adaptation to the wants of a Christian community.

The Jewish Church, therefore, may well rejoice that now in her full development she is no longer barren as of old, but is fruitful in men of holy lives,

and in great and constraining principles. In old time there was probably never more than a small portion of the people—a remnant, as the prophets call it—to whom the law was more than a round of unmeaning ceremonies; and Judæa itself was but as a speck upon the earth's surface. Even now it may be true that Christianity is but of limited extent: but it has raised the nations which profess it to the foremost rank in power, and influence, and civilization; even the mass of the people it controls with a force unknown to other religions, while in numerous individuals it is the rule of their daily conduct, and of their most secret feelings; and the principles which it enunciates have directed the whole course of modern thought and progress. Even erroneous views of the doctrines of Christianity have retained something of the vigour of the parent stock; and while other religions have been content with an external obedience, and with the practice of formal rites, Christianity ever has claimed, and still claims, the heart, and demands of those who profess it, that they should submit even their inmost wills to the pure and holy will of God.

But while the Jewish Church has thus attained to its legitimate development in Christianity,—the religion, that is, of the Messiah,—the Jewish polity, on the contrary, has ceased to exist. Repeatedly, from the time when first they set up a king, the Jews nationally had separated themselves from their Church, and the breach widened as their rulers more and more refused obedience to the counsels of the prophets; but they finally and definitely severed themselves

from it only when they cast out of their synagogues all who acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. As long as the theocracy lasted, Church and State had been with them united and the same; but the establishment of the royal power did not necessarily involve an opposition between the two elements. Their civil government might have been faithful, as David and Hezekiah were, to the principles set forth in the Law and the Prophets. As a fact it generally was unfaithful; but even after our Lord's crucifixion their Sanhedrim might have examined the proofs of His divine mission, and have accepted Him as their promised Christ. The course they actually took was to reject Christ, and God has rejected them from being a nation. But though by this decision they ceased to be the depositaries of the divine promises, yet St. Paul denies that God thereby cast off His people. For as in Elijah's time, when the ten tribes forsook the Mosaic covenant and their king established an idolatrous worship, there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, even so, he argues, at the present time also there is "a remnant according to the election of grace." And it was in this remnant that God recognised His true people; and never, probably, had it been so numerous as when in every synagogue of the dispersion there were gathering round those three thousand devout men, who on the first Whitsuntide had received the word, all such in every place as were waiting for the consolation of Israel. And still for forty years Judæa was the chief seat of the Christian Church, and every-

where its missionaries made the lost sheep of the house of Israel the first objects of their care ; so that never were God's mercies greater to those who were truly His than when the outward bonds which united the nation to Him were about to be broken, and the Mosaic ritual and national worship about to cease.

To this cessation of their national existence the prophets had ever looked forward, and endeavoured to prepare the minds of the people for its approach. Even Jacob had warned them that the sceptre must depart from Judah when Shiloh came. What place could there be for the Aaronic priesthood, when the true Priest had entered upon His office ? What room for sacrifice and offering, when the very Paschal Lamb had made the Atonement ? And with the symbolic rites, the earthly kingdom must also cease ; for as the Messiah's true kingdom is not of this world, its continuance was plainly incompatible with His spiritual sovereignty. There could not exist at one and the same time two kingdoms, one founded on material promises and with temporal sanctions, the other spiritual and eternal, and both be true. For a time the earthly kingdom had a true existence and a rational purpose, as symbolizing and preparing for the spiritual kingdom in due time to be revealed ; it served to receive and guard the truth which God was pleased gradually to reveal ; and it also provided a fit place and scene for our Lord's ministry. But when the better and enduring kingdom had come, the preparatory must pass away. Even if the Jews had received Christ as a nation, and therefore had not



had their polity and institutions swept away by the avenging armies of Rome, still must these things have ceased. Just as everywhere the little band of Jews round whom the Gentile converts gathered, gradually lost their nationality, and were merged in those Gentiles and became one with them, so must temple and sacrifice, priest and Levite, tribe and lineage, their laws and rites and ceremonies, everything, in short, distinctively Jewish, have been absorbed in Christianity, and disappeared. The people might have continued, but they would have been simply a Christian people inhabiting Judæa, with no special privileges, no peculiar promises, nothing to distinguish them in their relation to God from a Gentile Church far away at the ends of the earth. Their high lineage would have given them an especial interest in the eyes of other nations, just as the sight of their city now awakens strong emotions in the heart of every Christian traveller; but it is the memory of the past, not the actual present, which stirs his feelings. There is no manifestation now of God's glory there, nor are prayers more sure of acceptance when made within the precincts of its once glorious temple than in the most remote regions of the globe; nor does any special providence watch over its fortunes. A Christian Israel might be the highest among Christian nations in birth, but probably it would not be foremost in purity of doctrine, or knowledge, or power, or influence. For the Gentiles are not called into an inferior place,—into that outer court to which the Jews of old arrogantly banished their proselytes; but whatever the seed of

Abraham possessed in promise or privilege, in that the Gentiles fully share. As a matter of fact, this slow absorption of Judaism did not take place; the Jews nationally rejected Christ; and God saw fit to remove a danger out of the Church's path by the complete obliteration of the Jewish polity and priesthood. Had they continued, they might have drawn away the Christian Church to the same confidence in mere external observances which had made the Jewish Church so barren. They might have given a preponderance to principles and tendencies from which it cost the Church, as it was, a vigorous struggle to escape. And probably it was even a greater mercy to the Jews than to the Gentile world: for those who in every city received the Gospel were rescued from the vain folly of attempting to combine Judaism with Christianity; while such as rejected it then, or reject it now, must surely sometimes doubt whether a divine religion, which has become and continues an impossibility, has not had its purpose fulfilled; and if so, what other fulfilment has there been but Christianity? And when, from time to time, any of Jewish lineage do draw near unto Christ, they are obliged to accept the Gospel as a spiritual religion, from which all the gross and material elements of their old faith have been purged away. Even in justice, therefore, was God's mercy shewn; for He did but remove that which had become obsolete, and which, had it still been permitted to exist, might have proved a stumbling-block in the Church's path, by causing it to retain too strong an element

of Judaism in its rites and institutions and modes of thought.

The Jewish Church, therefore, has sustained no injury. She was barren: there were but few whose lives were influenced by the truths of which she was the depositary. Though planted upon a fruitful hill, she had brought forth only wild grapes. The state of morality among the Jews was probably considerably in advance of that which prevailed generally among the heathen, but the books which narrate their history forbid our entertaining a very high idea of their moral character. Upon the advent of the Messiah, their Church is to appear in a more glorious aspect:—“Her stones,” we read, “shall be laid in antimony; and her foundations in sapphires;” “All her children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of her children;” “In righteousness she shall be established;” “No weapon that is formed against her shall prosper.” And henceforward she is exposed to no further vicissitudes; no further change awaits her: for “as the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so has Jehovah sworn that He will not be wroth with her, nor rebuke her.” Prophecies such as these neither have had, nor can have, any fulfilment in Jewish history. They belong, not to the national and carnal portion of Judaism, but to its spiritual element, which still exists, but has been developed into the Christian Church. In its path there dwells no Jewish nation in the Holy Land to give even the appearance of a Church resting upon temporal sanctions. The “city of God” is no longer

of the earth, earthy, but is a spiritual community, governed by laws given by inspiration, guided by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, with its chief Ruler in heaven, with promises which relate to the soul and not to the body, and with requirements to be fulfilled only by a holy life and by the affections being set upon heaven. Its truths are indeed embodied in institutions, and rites, and ceremonies; it has a form of government and material organization, because these things are indispensable for the adequate discharge of its appointed duties: but the ends which it proposes to itself are spiritual; the fitting and preparing man for a heavenly inheritance. And in labouring for this end, it frames its institutions for the sole use of edifying, that "all things may be done decently and in order;" and that "the whole body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, may increase according to the increase of God."

Within this community the true Jew finds the full realization of all the most glorious promises of the previous dispensation: nay, the careful examination of that dispensation would be the best preparative for studying the claims of the Gospel; for it ever looked onward unto Christ. But once admitted, he must cease to be a Jew. The higher development is incompatible with the preparatory stage. Just as at first the Church, so entirely Jewish, abandoned, though not without a struggle, its nationality, as a thing now without a meaning; so in all ages, in entering into a spiritual covenant, the carnal Israel parts with all

its material and earthly hopes. The spiritual perfection to which St. Paul had attained was such "that though he had known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth knew he Him no more." And something of the same spirit must influence the Jewish convert: he must not think of retaining any special promises and prerogatives in which the Gentiles do not share, but must be content to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord."

In old time, several generations must pass before the proselyte was upon an equal footing with the Jew; and his admittance even into the outer court was possible only by his submission to a weary round of ceremonies. Even then he held so inferior a place that it was profanation for a Jew to intermarry with his children, and much more with one who was himself a convert. But in the fifty-fifth chapter the Prophet taught them that all these obstructions were to be removed. The blessings of their covenant were no longer to be churlishly hoarded up, but "every one who thirsted was to come to their waters: and the wine and milk were to be bestowed without money and without price." And lest these metaphorical expressions should not be understood, he explained them himself as signifying the means of grace, the means whereby men lead a holy life, whereby "the soul lives;" and bade "the wicked therefore forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon

him, and to our God, and He will abundantly pardon." It is title enough to His mercy that men forsake their sins and return unto Him. Nor was the Prophet content with declaring these general principles, but in the next chapter made a still further advance in distinguishing the two dispensations, by shewing that all personal disabilities and national distinctions were to be done away. "Let not the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to Jehovah, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, I am a dry tree . . . For I will give unto them in My house, and within My walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters:"—a better name, therefore, than that of the lineal descendants of Abraham:—"I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." It is the same lesson which St. Peter learnt, that "with God is no respect of persons, but in every nation, and not among the Jews only, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." But often as the prophets had declared it, nevertheless it needed an express revelation to induce the apostle to consent to its practical application; so little influence do abstract truths exercise over our minds, when our prejudices and the daily habits of our lives are opposed to them.

But the truths thus clearly taught in the first two sections of the prophecy are much more fully and directly declared in the last nine chapters. Metaphorical expressions, which might have failed in conveying to the mind an exact idea of the Prophet's meaning, are

there replaced by statements so plain that none could misunderstand their application; as where we read that in the new dispensation there shall be neither temple nor sacrifice<sup>d</sup>, and that the priests shall no longer be of Aaron's line<sup>e</sup>. Expressly God declares, that He will be "sought of them that asked not for Him; and will be found of them that sought Him not: and that He will say, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by His name;" whereas of Israel He adds, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people." God will nevertheless shew them mercy, "for His servants' sakes He will not destroy them all." But His justice must visit them: "I will number you," He says, "to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter:" and while the Gentiles enjoy the blessings and privileges of the new covenant, the Jews, excepting the believing remnant, shall forfeit them by their own wilful obduracy. "Behold, saith the Lord God, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, My servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, My servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, My servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto My chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call His servants by another name<sup>f</sup>." In these words we have not merely the call of the Gentiles, but the prediction that they will obey the

<sup>d</sup> Isa. lxvi. 1—3.<sup>e</sup> Ibid. 21.<sup>f</sup> Isa. lxxv. 1, 2, 8, 12—15.

call, and that the Church will mainly consist of them : but that while there will indeed be a remnant of the Jews, “ a seed which shall inherit Judah’s mountains,” there will be no full harvest ; for the great mass of the nation will reject the Messiah, and their very name therefore will disappear ; and the Church’s title given her in the Greek city of Antioch will shew how complete is the distinction between her full development in Christ, and the time when her privileges were confined to a small province of Palestine.

It is true that in describing this entire change the Prophet draws his imagery from what actually existed in his day, and that he predicts the glorious establishment and ever-widening spread of Christianity in terms borrowed from the Mosaic ritual. But this could not well be otherwise ; for men can only use the language and ideas of their own times, even when the things signified belong to remote ages, and a very different state of circumstances. But as there are various questions connected with this third section of the prophecy, which would require a longer time for their proper consideration than would be possible now, I must defer them until some future opportunity. For to-day it will have been enough if I have succeeded in shewing that there is a real unity of subject in all three portions of the prophecy, and that the title of Evangelic Prophet is due to Isaiah, not only as having set forth the death of our Redeemer, and the doctrines which explain His death, but also as having clearly foretold the nature and character of Christ’s universal Church : that it was to be no mere enlargement of



Judaism, but that there was to be a vital change in its entire theory, so that all that was local, and temporary, and distinctly Jewish should disappear, and only the spiritual element remain; and that in this Church the Gentiles would so largely predominate as everywhere to absorb the believing Jews; and that thus reconstituted, and made an universal Church, it would carry into all lands the tidings of salvation through a crucified Redeemer, and summon men everywhere, not to earthly privileges, but to participate in that heavenly hope which the Emmanuel Himself condescended to share, when "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

## SERMON IX.

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ISAIAH lxxv. 17.

*“Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”*

UPON a former occasion, in preaching upon this verse, I sketched the main outlines of Isaiah's teaching with respect to the development of the Jewish into the Christian Church, as contained in the two first portions of this his final prophecy; and I then briefly combated the idea that the Prophet's symbols and figures, which naturally were taken from the state of things then existing, must necessarily, or would even probably, have a literal fulfilment. My object was to shew that these prophecies belong to the Christian Church as Christian, — as embracing, therefore, both Jew and Gentile within her fold, upon equal terms, and with all distinction and disparity removed. In the Christian Church the Jew retains no right by reason of his lineage, he can reserve to himself no prerogatives; nor must he so interpret the promises as to exclude Christians from their equal participation. We are not living under a double dispensation, with two Churches, each with its own sanctions and its peculiar inheritance; but in that Church which is the one body of Christ, and in which “he is not a

Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh.”

The reservation of certain special privileges for Jews has probably arisen from the erroneous supposition of there being a contrariety or opposition between the Jewish and the Christian Church. Of course they are capable of being contrasted in the various periods of their existence,—just as we contrast the Christian Church as it was in primitive times with that same Church in mediæval and modern times, though in its essence and definition, in its nature and in its rights, it has ever been one and the same; nor has the truth of which it is the depository at any period been different in kind or in degree from that which it now holds. And naturally a still broader contrast may be drawn between the Church before and after the advent of the Messiah. For to the Jew truth was given in shadow, and outline, and prophecy; to the Christian it has been given in substance. The one looked forward to a promise to be accomplished; for the other that promise has been fulfilled. In the earlier dispensation revelation was a faint light, gradually brightening unto the perfect day; in the later it was from the first the noon-tide splendour of the Messiah’s teaching, and the divine words of the Apostles. Henceforward no new revelation is to be expected; no line of prophets now exists to declare new truths, or modify old. Even of the councils of the Church, we affirm that they must not decree as an article of the faith anything that cannot be proved by Holy Writ. Our

business is simply to understand, to hold fast, and to profit by the truth once delivered unto the saints.

But however great may be the contrast between the Jewish Church as being the preparation, and the Christian Church as being the completeness, there is no distinction in their inner essence. They form the one revelation of God to mankind, and the later dispensation is but the ripeness, the maturity of the earlier. And it would be as possible for the child to exist side by side with himself when grown to man's estate, as for the preparatory Church to continue contemporaneously with its own development. The one grew out of the other, and is in fact the other in its mature and lasting stage; and whatever belonged to the Jew in his covenant relation to God belongs now to the Christian, excepting those childish things which by reason of riper age he has put away. God's dealings with mankind form one great whole, from the day when He gave to her whose name was Life, as being the mother of us all, the central promise of our faith, that her Seed should be the Deliverer, to the day when that promise was fulfilled in the Virgin's Child; and thence ever onward until the dispensation shall close, and all mankind stand before the throne of the woman's Seed in judgment, to receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether they were good or whether they were evil.

The promises, moreover, of Isaiah were made to the Jewish nation because it contained the Jewish Church, —just as now the Church visible has possession of the promises because it contains the Church invisible.

In theory, indeed, the two were commensurate; the Jewish nation ought to have been identical with the Jewish Church. But it was not so;—just as now we know that many are called, but few chosen. And just as we are not anxious to make this failure, so to speak, too prominent, but treat our ordinances as if they invariably produced the wished-for effect, drawing no sharp line of distinction between such of the Church's professing members as are so only outwardly, and such as have made their calling and election sure, but treating all alike as her regenerate sons; ever warning them, indeed, that a life of holiness must be the seal of their acceptance, but leaving the separation between the true and the false to the unerring Judge above; encircling all alike, when living, within the Church's fold, and when dead, uttering over them the same words of pious hope: just as St. Paul addressed his Epistles to congregations of saints and elect men, even when about to rebuke them sharply for sins of the darkest dye:—so was it with Isaiah. It was no business of his too exactly to distinguish between the Israel which was so only after the flesh, and that which was truly so after the spirit. He warns, rebukes, exhorts, comforts, encourages, gives glorious promises to all alike. But his words do not equally belong to all; for they are each individually working out their probation, and in the aggregate of their individual probation the nation will also be proved, and attain to its doom. The Prophet does indeed from time to time foretell the misuse which Israel would make of its privileges, and its consequent

rejection; but it was necessary that he should so foretell it as not to interfere with their free-will, and rather as warning and admonishing them of the inevitable consequences of their misdeeds, than as declaring the irrevocable decrees of the Almighty. For man's free-will, and therefore his probation, would be an impossibility were either the threatenings or the promises of God unconditional; and this the Church of old was taught in the prophecy of Jonah, which contained the great lesson, that even after the most definite predictions,—that “yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” the declarations of the prophets might fail of their accomplishment if men truly repented, and thereby obtained mercy of the Lord.

Isaiah therefore addresses the Jews as God's chosen people, and speaks of them as still being in possession of His love; and rightly so, for they were the Church. And in describing the future glory to which the Church should attain when her Messiah had come, and His kingdom been established upon earth, he fitly took as the groundwork of his description the highest conceivable perfection of that state of things which then existed, that is, of the theocracy, of which the Jewish nation was the object, and Jerusalem the centre. The chapters which chiefly contain this description are the sixtieth, the sixty-second, and the sixty-fifth, in the last of which we have a picture of what is popularly called the millennial or paradisiacal state of happiness. A new heaven and a new earth are to be created, in which “there shall no more be an

infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days;" there will be no premature decay, nor any other kind of failure or disappointment; "they shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat; . . . they shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble;" there shall be a speedy answer to prayer,—“Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear;” and lastly, there shall be a time of general peace,—“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord.”

Now if the Prophet is describing in these words the spiritual blessings of the Church,—if his images and metaphors pourtray that state of things which does partially exist in Christendom, and would fully exist if men’s professions of Christianity were sincere, and their lives in accordance with their professions,—nothing could be easier of explanation. The Messiah’s advent is to inaugurate a new era, in which there will be found everything requisite for the perfection of man’s moral and spiritual nature; it is to bring him into intimate communion with God, and subdue in him every carnal and depraved appetite. But if the Prophet’s words are not metaphorical, but to be literally understood, they convey the promise merely of long life; of success in trade and agriculture, as the result, not of human prudence and industry, but of a special providence; and, simultaneously, of a change in the structural form of that portion of the animal

creation which infallibly disappears before the advance of agriculture and civilization. Such an age of material prosperity the Jewish Church certainly never enjoyed; and when we turn to the Christian Church, we feel that it has been founded upon better promises. The very object of the Gospel is to wean men from these earthly desires, and all who embrace it are required to regard such things as matters indifferent, and rather to be shunned than sought for. The New Testament throughout summons Christ's people to a warfare, to the endurance of tribulation, to the abandonment of worldly wealth and carnal enjoyment; and bids them wage an incessant struggle against the inbred corruption of their own nature, against temptation from without, and faintness and lukewarmness from within. And the reward promised is discipline,—the loving chastisement of our heavenly Father,—and with it Christ's gift of peace to the soul. What reward would long life have been to St. Paul, eager to depart, because that was far better, yet content to remain and labour for the good of others? What reward to Christian men to live in houses of their own building, and eat the fruit of trees of their own planting, when their citizenship is in heaven, and their earnest desire to be conformed to the likeness of that Saviour who had not where to lay His head? The promises of the New Testament are not earthly success and bodily enjoyment, but earthly trial and the subjection of the body, and unceasing labour, and patient waiting, by which the soul is prepared for heavenly blessedness; and in



supporting this "trial of their faith," Christian men find their solace, not in being allowed to combine earthly success with the discipline which fits them for heaven, but in the foretaste of spiritual joys even here; "for the kingdom of heaven is within you."

On the contrary, the sanctions of the Jewish Church were, in the main, temporal; the mind of the people was not yet spiritual enough to be strongly moved by spiritual promises; and naturally, therefore, the Prophet's language was drawn from that which would have been the perfection of the blessings proposed to the Jew under the terms of his covenant. But there is every reason to believe that the higher and more pious class of minds among the Jews were able to penetrate behind the veil, and perceive that spiritual blessings and privileges were set forth under the types of earthly and carnal enjoyments. We know that even among the followers of the false Prophet, their best commentators have from early times regarded the material joys of Paradise as types of pure and spiritual pleasures; and certainly Christians, having the express teaching of our Lord and His Apostles, ought not to cling to the "beggarly elements of the law," nor imagine that temporal prosperity is one of Christ's gifts. If whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth; if it be the trial of our faith which is precious; if, in a word, Christians are to take up their cross and follow Christ,—a millennial period, as it is popularly understood, would be a time full of the subtlest dangers for the soul; a time enervating and enfeebling, with nothing to try men's faith, and thereby make it

strong, nothing to exercise their patience, and forbearance, and charity towards others, nothing to make them watchful over themselves. It would call forth no endurance, practise them in no manly and Christian virtue. Piety and religion would be gregarious instead of personal, the virtue of the mass, and not of the individual; there would be no training of the man, nothing to prepare those whose unhappy lot it was to be born under such a dispensation for a higher and better state of things, but everything to make them worldly-minded, and to forget God. And above all, God's great and wonderful gift of free-will, by which man was made in the image of his Maker, and became capable of good and evil, would be exchanged for instincts, no higher in kind, though exercised upon higher things, than those which now serve to guide the inferior creation.

It seems, moreover, plain from the Prophet's own words that he did not intend his language to be literally understood; for part of what he says is confessedly metaphorical. The lion could not eat straw like the bullock, and continue to be a lion; for the change in his structure necessary to enable him to crop and digest a vegetable diet would destroy in him that differentia by virtue of which he is a lion. And even were this change possible, nothing would be gained by it. A lion so transformed would be a defect in creation; for it is the glory at present of the animal world, that God has so formed it as to fit each member of it for its place; and the comparative anatomist by the sight of a single bone can tell what was the

general structure, the habits, and mode of life of the animal to which it belonged,—so wonderful are the works of God. But a beast of prey condemned to a graminivorous life would be a blot, a defect in creation, and would destroy the harmony and beauty of the Creator's laws. And again, we should be, as a matter of fact, no nearer a state of paradisiacal perfection than we are now, but rather the contrary. The beasts of prey existed long before God prepared a paradise for man's abode, and at the very time when He pronounced all His works to be good. To suppose that they are an evil, a defect, rests upon the false assumption that the death of an animal is an evil. The Manichees of old said that it was, and brought forward the existence of death, and of beasts of prey, as proofs that the Creator of the world was Himself evil; but the Fathers of the Church who wrote against this impious sect, denied that either one or the other marred the perfection of Paradise. And their arguments have been confirmed by the discoveries of modern times, which prove that from the first life and death went hand in hand, and that long before Adam was formed, monstrous animals, with quaint and uncouth shapes, were busy on land and sea preying upon one another, and death as active among the members of the lower creation as it is now.

But if the Prophet's words themselves suggest that they are to be metaphorically understood, so are there higher considerations which militate against the view that there will ever exist before the great day of judgment a state either of general prosperity or of uni-

versal piety. For the great purpose of this present state of things seems to be the probation of God's people. Now why, or how it is, we cannot answer; but certainly the fact seems to be, that probation is possible only where the few have to struggle against the many; our Lord Himself seems to tell us, that faith will always be small in amount compared with the vast mass of lukewarm semi-infidelity which will surround it<sup>a</sup>, and that the few who live for another world will be scarcely worthy of mention compared with the many who are influenced by earthly motives<sup>b</sup>. It is a difficulty why this should be so, a thing which seems hard to us, and beyond our understanding; but we may be sure that it is in no respect inconsistent with God's goodness and mercy, and that it seems hard to us only because we see but a small part, and not the whole of God's dealings. We may then confine ourselves to the fact; and the teaching of Holy Scripture seems plainly to be, that as for some ineffable reason the sufferings of Christ were necessary, so it is also necessary that His people should now "suffer with Him, that they may be also glorified together<sup>c</sup>." We may add, that the smallness of Christ's flock is in accordance with the general law of the Creator's works; for certainly one of the most striking things upon earth is the profuse expenditure everywhere of means to produce a limited result. It is seen in the incalculable periods during which this earth existed before man appeared upon its surface; it is seen in the formation of so many

<sup>a</sup> Luke xviii. 8.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. vii. 14.

<sup>c</sup> Rom. viii. 17.

worlds in our own planetary system, the conditions of which apparently negative the existence upon them of the higher forms of life. On this earth it is most painfully seen in the vast waste, as it seems to us in our ignorance, of human life. Of the countless millions of men now alive, how few are placed in such circumstances as to be capable of attaining even to a low degree of morality, to say nothing of mental cultivation and religion. Even in our own country, in many respects so highly favoured, if men are congregated into large towns, coarse forms of infidelity seem of necessity rapidly to pervade the mass; and if they dwell in thinly populated villages, the mind lies dormant, and ignorance prevails. And between these extremes, how many are the mental doubts, the hard and difficult questions, which perplex our faith; how numerous the seductions from the world, and from our own selves, which lower our moral state; how overpowering the influence of the things amidst which we live, to make our religion cold and formal! All these, and many such considerations, seem to shew that when the Apostle warned men that "through much tribulation they must enter the kingdom of heaven," he was declaring not a fact, but a principle; that there is some reason, some wise moral necessity, why it so should be.

And in musing upon these difficulties men wonder that there should be so many stumblingblocks in the believer's way. They feel that if they were almighty they would remove them. They would have a world without sin and sorrow, without guilt and shame, without doubts and disputings. Of old time this led

men into Manicheeism ; now it prompts them only to catch at anything in the Bible which seems to favour the notion of a millennium. In both cases the root of the feeling is the same. It is discontent with the state of things which God has appointed, as being really best for us, and a protest against Him in His character as Creator, because He has permitted not merely the existence of evil, but that it should be so dominant, and human probation so difficult. Had we really faith in God's goodness, and a proper sense of our own ignorance, we should feel sure that good and wise purposes really are accomplished by this permitted existence of evil, and that it is in the end better for mankind that probation should be difficult than that it should be easy. We can see that in God's dealings with man there is something which surpasses our powers ; something which we cannot understand ;—I do not mean in revelation only, but in all His works there is at the root a mystery which we cannot penetrate. But our business is not to suppose that we can measure and judge the ways of the Infinite, but humbly to bow before Him as One whose ways are not as our ways, neither His thoughts as our thoughts.

Nor is this more than right reason requires : for if we knew all God's works, if the beginning and the end were before us, as well as that small portion of existence in which our lot is cast, and if our mental powers were equal to the task, we might then be able to form a judgment upon the question, whether God's dealings with mankind are wise and just. Probably hereafter we may understand His works ; it may be

a part of the intellectual enjoyment of heaven to meditate upon the wisdom and goodness which He has displayed; but it is quite certain that we have neither sufficient materials, and probably not sufficient powers of mind to form even a probable opinion now upon His purposes in creation; and it is the office of faith, as being the evidence of things not seen, to support us in our doubts, and strengthen us for the task of bearing all the bodily and mental trials of life, without wavering in our trust and confidence in our heavenly Father.

We can see, however, that a millennium would be no fit place or time of probation. The absence of temptation, the easy benevolence which had to make no sacrifices, the tranquil sleep of unstirred passions, the piety by instinct, the removal of all necessity for self-restraint and self-discipline, the need no longer to watch and pray lest we entered into temptation, the firm health, the long life, the material prosperity,—all this is compatible with physical enjoyment; it would be the perfection of our lower animal nature: but the soul would not be trained by such things for a spiritual existence, but would slumber in an inglorious repose and an enfeebling and benumbing effeminacy.

But if it be intended as a reward to follow upon man's probation, it is too little. To reward the body for the struggle of the soul; to give one, whose heart is fixed upon heaven, earthly happiness and luxury, and mere physical enjoyment, while his higher nature pined away in drowsy inactivity, is to give him a thing not worth the striving after. Not for this have we

been taught to pray, but that "we may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in God's eternal and everlasting glory." To the true Christian, weaned from the enjoyments of this world, and with his affection set on things above, a millennium would be but an intermediate purgatory, without its purifying use; and well might the waiting soul exclaim, How long, O Lord, holy and true? and grieve over the protracted deferring of its better hopes.

We may conclude, therefore, that the images of earthly prosperity are used by the prophets as symbols of spiritual blessings. They took the highest perfection of the state of things which then existed, in order to represent truths which no human language can adequately convey: and, similarly, the main features of the Christian Church are set forth under images drawn from the Mosaic ritual. Nor was any other course open to them. They could only use the language and the ideas of their own time. Their words were addressed to their contemporaries, and to be intelligible must adapt themselves to their modes of thought. Just as Joshua could rationally only use the current ideas of his own time as regards the apparent motion of the sun, so the prophets could only use the current ideas of their time in religious matters as the foundation of their discourse, though the superstructure might rise aloft into a higher atmosphere. When sceptics find fault with this principle, they do but expose their own want of judgment. For why should Joshua, for instance, use the language of the nineteenth century rather than that of any other of the many



centuries which the world may yet last? For science is of rapid growth, and its language in the present day may seem as deficient in precision, and possibly as false in theory, to the wise of the twentieth century, as that of previous ages seems to scientific men now. And if inspired men were debarred from speaking in accordance with the ideas of their own times, the only language left for them would be that of the last year of the world's duration, and, consequently, their words would be unintelligible to all previous ages. And even then their language would fall short of the truth; for St. Paul tells us, that when he was caught up into heaven, the things he there heard were *ἄρρητα ῥήματα*, words which it was impossible to utter because there were no earthly terms capable of conveying notions of heavenly things. The words of earth cannot go beyond earthly matters. Even for the operations of the mind we are obliged to use terms which originally expressed material objects. And, similarly, in describing spiritual happiness the inspired writers could only draw their images from earthly blessings, nor had they any other means of setting forth the nature of the Christian Church than the use of symbols taken from the temple worship then existing at Jerusalem. When Christianity came, it brought with it more spiritualized ideas, and the words naturally followed: but the prophets had only Jewish words and ideas, and though they did elevate them and give them a Christian tendency, yet it was possible for them to do so only to a very limited extent. But when we go back to them from Christianity, we must

not debase Christian ideas to the Jewish level; we must not suppose that their full meaning was that simple literal sense in which the people of that time understood them, but must read them by the light of that perfect and final revelation of which they were the heralds and precursors.

To know what the Prophet himself meant by his words, or what was understood by the people of his time, is useful as the first step to their interpretation, but it is no full gauge or measure of their meaning. Once grant that "God spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets<sup>d</sup>," or that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost<sup>e</sup>," and it becomes a very small matter what the Prophet himself meant, or what the people understood. The question is, what God meant? And if in after ages He has been pleased to shew what He meant, we may thankfully accept His own explanation. And this elucidates what is meant by the double sense of prophecy. The Prophet was often thinking of some minor event, and his words have a true reference to it: but they also pass beyond. It was something local, temporary, transient, which called forth the prophecy, and the Holy Ghost so shaped and moulded it that it would have its real fulfilment in something remote, momentous, eternal. The words have a true reference to some occurrence in Jewish or contemporaneous history; but a still truer reference to something Christian and spiritual. Not, indeed, always so; some prophecies seem to have no double meaning;

<sup>d</sup> Heb. i. 1.

<sup>e</sup> 2 Pet. i. 21.

and the higher use of these perhaps is to give us some neutral ground on which to test the reality of prediction. But all the more important prophecies do look onward to something far beyond the Prophet's own ideas. Were the Bible a common book, I would grant at once that this view is irrational; in a common book the only question is, what was the author's own meaning? But if St. Paul spoke the truth when he said that "all Scripture—all Jewish Scripture—was given by inspiration of God," we may reasonably expect to find special elements in what was written under such extraordinary conditions. And though this is a reason why those who are competent for the task should carefully examine into the authenticity and genuineness of the many separate works contained in the Jewish Scriptures, claiming as they do an element which separates and distinguishes them from all other books whatsoever, except the writings of the New Testament, it certainly cannot be rational to treat them as a common book until this claim has been disproved. Men may take, and very fairly may claim to take, very different views of the nature of inspiration: but whatever it may be,—whether much or little,—it so far is a special element, and must have its due consideration.

The double sense, then, of prophecy means that a prediction might have a passing reference to some inferior event, while essentially, and in its full purport, it looked onward to a larger fulfilment. It does not mean that a prophecy can have two equal accomplishments. It can have but one adequate fulfilment,

and in its inner essence can refer only to one event. The Messianic prophecies, for instance, of Isaiah were not fulfilled in Jewish history : several of them started with a reference to some present occurrence, but no commentator has ever yet succeeded in producing any person there, or event, or series of events, to which they can be applied. And in like manner, no prophecy can embrace two parallel events, or two events which stand in no relation to one another. The lower and partial fulfilment is only possible in some fact which itself symbolizes the one main fulfilment. Thus a prophecy might have a temporary reference to Josiah, and a final reference to Messiah, provided that Josiah was, so far as the prophecy required, a type of the Messiah. And so of Jerusalem, and the Jews. Some prophecies belong to them absolutely, just as other prophecies belong to Edom, and Moab, and Tyre ; and these prophecies were fulfilled in their temporal fortunes literally,—just as the prophecy of Agabus, concerning a famine in the days of Claudius Cæsar, referred to that famine and nothing else. But Jerusalem was also a type or symbol of the Christian Church, and such prophecies as referred to her in her representative character, though they might spring out of some event in her history, and be partially fulfilled in her temporal fortunes, yet really had their sole, true, and final fulfilment in that perfect dispensation, to which the Jewish dispensation was ancillary.

But if this is what interpreters mean by the double sense of prophecy, it is something entirely opposed to any such view as would admit of the Prophet's words

having first a spiritual fulfilment in the righteous lives and pure and holy conversation of Christian people, and then a material one in a millennium of earthly prosperity. Just as Isaiah described the rapid spread and the firm establishment of Christianity under images taken from the temple service, and yet these images refer in their real meaning exclusively to Christian objects, and justify no idea of the restoration of the Jewish polity, or of the Levitical priesthood, and Jewish forms of worship,—so his images of earthly prosperity, of plentiful supplies of gold, of men inhabiting houses built by themselves, and eating the fruit of trees of their own planting, of a healthy and numerous progeny, of immunity from accidents and dangers, and of human life prolonged till it equalled the duration of trees, all these and the like metaphors really refer to the far higher and purer blessings which Christianity bestows upon those who heartily embrace it. As they were the greatest blessings to which the Jew aspired, so they symbolize the greatest blessings which God bestows in Christ. But the double sense of prophecy is not elastic enough to permit us to suppose that after a spiritual fulfilment they will finally culminate in an era totally distinct in its nature from Christianity, and which will at most be only a more perfect repetition of the earthly and carnal sanctions of the Mosaic law,—a retrograde era, which would neither be a fit time for probation, nor an adequate reward. There may be,—there probably is,—a progress in Christendom, a tendency to a purer and holier state. There are thousands of earnest men

labouring in this hope; and in proportion as it is realized, and Christian principles obtain a firmer hold over the community, and with them Christian practice, so far the predictions of the Prophet will obtain a completer fulfilment. But it must be separated by no gulf from the present order of things; it must be the legitimate development of what we now have. The Christian religion may spread over new realms; greater success may attend, at home, increasing efforts to bring all members of the community within the influence of the means of grace; the reaction which ever seems so strangely to disappoint our hopes, the tendencies to evil which seem so wonderfully to grow out of and thwart all our plans for good, and the new difficulties which each age makes for itself, may retard less than we should have expected the progress of the work; and so at length the better era may begin. But it can only be in the way of the more complete realization of what we at present have in principle. We have nothing to justify us in expecting a new dispensation, which shall supersede Christianity, but, on the contrary, have every reason to believe that the admonitions and warnings, and threatenings and promises of the New Testament will continue to be applicable to Christian men until the day when our Lord shall appear again for judgment, and probation cease, and faith and hope be swallowed up in certainty.

It is no part of my present subject to discuss why God has ever from the first permitted so many difficulties to stand in the way of His rational creatures during their probation; but inasmuch as this is the

method of His providence, and He is all-wise, I am justified in concluding that it is better for mankind that it should so be; and therefore that this millennial scheme, like so many schemes of human benevolence, would practically be found an inferior state to that which exists at present, and fraught with greater evils. There are many things which it is good for men to endeavour to do: it is good to try to remove trouble and sorrow, and poverty and sin: all labour is good, and in labouring for unselfish ends men reap a pure and holy reward. But a wise Providence prevents the fulfilment of many of our efforts; in part perhaps we succeed, but fresh evils break forth where least we expected them, and perfection is as far removed from us as if we had never laboured at all.

Hereafter we shall possibly know why this is. At that day when God will be justified in all His words and works, we shall perceive that His wisdom has never failed, and that when in old time the families of the earth were left to the light of nature while the Jew had a special revelation; or again, when practically a similar state of things exists now; while neither Jew nor Christian have at all adequately acted up to the light given them:—difficult as the problem seems to be, why this prodigal abundance of human life, and this limitation of its greatest blessings, yet doubtless we shall find that it was incompatible neither with the wisdom nor goodness of God. We too often measure God's wisdom by human wisdom; we see as in a mirror, enigmatically<sup>f</sup>, so as only to guess at the

<sup>f</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

meaning; and then we imagine that these distorted images are the true representations of heavenly things. When studying the Scriptures we forget that the ideas which we thereby obtain of God, and of His will and works, are necessarily doubly limited; limited first, by the imperfection of human language, and secondly by the weakness of the human understanding: and thus we often attach to the words of Scripture notions which do not belong to them. And these may be absolute errors, mistakes as to their meaning, the misunderstanding of what we read; or they may be simply confused human ideas, right perhaps to some extent, true as far as we are capable of truth, but utterly inadequate as any fitting representation of the realities above. Still, if we keep to the direct teaching of Holy Scripture, however inadequate our views may be in themselves, and however childish they may be compared with the knowledge to which we may attain in a higher state, they are true to us, the truth suitable to our present imperfections, and absolutely sufficient for our use here upon earth, and in proportion to our present powers and necessities; but when we travel beyond Scripture, when we go to it not for practical purposes, but to satisfy a vain curiosity, when we indulge in rash speculations as to the cause of our being, and the nature of the Creator's acts, we are seeking an answer to difficulties utterly beyond our range. As well might the inferior creation endeavour to understand the acts of man, as for man to seek to understand God. Governed by instincts, they can form no idea of the reason which controls thinking man: and



we are as far removed from God as they are from us, and as unable to understand His doings.

Our reason was given us to guide us in our earthly course; and God has seen fit to give light to our reason by means of His inspired Word: but if we use our reason to pry into mysteries which it was never intended to examine, and if we search the Scripture, not for the words of eternal life, but for speculation, the result can only be error. The Bible was given us for our use in the journey of life, and is adapted, therefore, to our present powers, and to the understandings of the many, and not of the few: it was given for a moral and not for an intellectual purpose, and it is only when used for its rightful purpose that we can hope to be guided by it into truth, and obtain God's blessing upon our use of it. And, in accordance with the general method of God's dealings with us, the evidence for the authenticity and inspiration of God's Word, and that it really is God's Word, is sufficient without being overpowering; and, equally, the great truths which it conveys are plain and simple, while nevertheless they can be misunderstood. It is possible both for the frivolous to mistake them, and for the perverse to misapply them. The impious sect of whom I have spoken before, brought forward the Bible itself as a proof of their doctrines, and argued that even in it might be traced the work of that evil principle which had ruined creation. But that there are difficulties in its interpretation, difficulties in its use, difficulties in its evidence, is after all but an instance of the great law which prevails in all God's

dealings with mankind, namely, that we have to undergo a real probation. We have to make a choice: but it would be only an apparent, and not a real choice, if one of the two sides had no arguments to offer, nothing to address to our reasons. But in making this choice, the balance of reason and evidence inclines to the one side; and for all practical purposes this is enough. There is proof enough to help our faith, even if faith must really strike its roots in, and draw its nourishment from, another soil. But let not the fact that we have difficulties to face mislead any one into the idea that therefore the truth and certainty of revelation are imperilled; for upon such a supposition, the Manichees of old were justified in asserting that the existence of evil in the world proved that it was not a good God who created it, but a malignant being. Rather we should feel that God intended these difficulties to prove and exercise our faith, that it might grow strong, and be able to remove even mountains from our path, instead of mouldering away in a state of things unfitted to exercise and train it. For our calling is not unto ease and security, but to endure hardship as the good soldiers of Jesus Christ; and the promise to us is, that if we "keep the word of God's patience, He will also keep us from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the earth, to try them that dwell upon the earth <sup>s</sup>."

The consideration, then, of this final portion of

Isaiah's prophecy has led us to several important conclusions. For we have seen, in the first place, that the Jewish economy was to be developed into the Christian Church. The two institutions are capable of contrast as existing the one before, and the other after the advent of the Messiah; but in their essence they are identical, as being the several stages of the Almighty's one revelation to mankind. In the next place we have seen that the Jewish Church is not to be restored. Priests of Aaron's line will never again offer sacrifice at Jewish altars. And the reason of this is stated at length in the arguments used by St. Paul in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. For he there denies that God cast off the Jewish Church. It never was rejected, but still exists, only in a more glorious form, as it attained to its full perfection in Christ. Its very name proves it; for we call it the Christian, that is, the Messianic Church, the Church whose Messiah has come; but as God has given the Messiah not merely the Jews but the Gentiles for His inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession, it has become a Church Catholic, universal, and therefore takes its name not from any one people, as if they had exclusive privileges now as they had of old, but from Him in whom God has made known the way of salvation to Gentile and Jew alike. As for the Jewish nation, as distinct from the Church, it can only become entitled to a share in God's promises by becoming Christian: for in Christ the promises of God are, yea, and Amen. Its present rejection has been occasioned by its having

rejected the Messiah, and thereby withdrawn itself from the Church; its restoration to God's favour can only be by its acceptance of the Messiah. What blessings may await it upon its return we know not: the Jews who never did reject Christ, but from the first were obedient to the faith, were content to be merged in the great body of believers; for having their affection set upon spiritual blessings, they counted all things beside as dung so that they could win Christ. St. Paul encourages us to believe that the Jews will nationally return to the Church, and says that their conversion will be so great a blessing to the Gentiles as to be like life from the dead: but for it to be so, they must return as a people thirsting after spiritual blessings, and with a heart as ready to give up all to follow Christ, as the apostles and first converts were of old. We have further seen that the Christian dispensation is spiritual, and with spiritual sanctions; that its object is to train the nobler and better part of man's nature for a higher and heavenly life; and therefore that it can have no millennium of earthly prosperity. To judge by the past, such a state would be destructive to all godliness; it is in the rough trial of discipline and affliction that men learn to fix their hopes upon a better world. But if God is to interpose by a special providence to prevent this millennial period having its natural effect in corrupting every better principle of our nature, such a special intervention is contrary to all His previous dealings with mankind, and violates our free-will. And this it does to establish a state of things which is neither

earth nor heaven ; which would neither train men for a future world, nor be the reward promised by Christ to those who keep the word of His patience.

But before I conclude this series of discourses, it is incumbent upon me briefly to examine several passages, especially in the last two chapters of this prophecy, which corroborate the conclusions just mentioned.

In the eighth verse, then, of the sixty-fifth chapter, we find the Jewish nation compared to a cluster of grapes, in which is the new wine. Now how is the new wine obtained from the grape? By crushing it, and letting it ferment, by which a separation takes place, and the wine is then drawn off, and carefully stored away, while the lees are rejected. So then the Jewish nation was broken up, and rent in pieces at the coming of Christ, and a fermentation took place in men's minds, and some received Him for their Saviour, and others rejected Him, and house was divided against house, and father against child ; and gradually the two elements stood farther and farther apart, till finally the armies of Rome scattered the unbelieving portion of the nation, while the believing portion became the apostles, and bishops, and chiefs of the Christian Church.

And this is exactly what the Prophet foretells. There is to be a destruction of the cluster, but not an utter one. There is "a blessing in it;" there is in the Jewish nation that which will be the regeneration of the world ; and this blessing, this new wine, will therefore escape the destruction which overtakes the

rest:—"So will I do for My servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of My mountain." The cluster of grapes shall be crushed, but God will not "destroy all:" the wine will remain; a seed shall be delivered, and from that seed shall spring the noble harvest of the Christian Church.

In the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth verses, the believing and unbelieving portions of the nation are sharply contrasted: "Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call His people by another name." I will not dwell upon this contrast; the passage is too plain to be misunderstood: I will only call attention to the explicit declarations of the fifteenth verse, where we read that the very name of Jew shall become a curse, and that God will slay them, and that His Church shall be called no longer by their name. And the event has answered to the prediction, and the Church does bear "a new name, and not its name of old. For after the manifestation of our Master, Christ, the believers were called Christians. And this name, instead of being a curse, is used by men as a general term of praise. For when they would extol any one, they conclude their encomiums by calling him a real Christian; and

if they would encourage any one, they bid him act as a Christian—do what becomes a Christian. And thus is it a title full of praise and commendation <sup>h</sup>.”

These prophecies, however, are still general; but in the sixty-ninth chapter we find three special characteristics of the new dispensation. It is to have no temple, no sacrifices, and no lineal priesthood. Of the first we read,—“Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest?” I am aware that some of the “higher critics” assume that these words refer to a purpose of the exiles to build a temple at Babylon; but such an idea is destitute of all historical foundation. It is, in fact, most improbable, that these words could have been written during the exile; for the people then were encouraged, rather than the contrary, to cherish the idea of returning to their land, and rebuilding their ruined house of God. And equally unlikely is it that any prophet would so have spoken subsequently to the return from exile, when Ezra and Nehemiah, and the prophets of their days, were urging the people to the vigorous prosecution of the work; for it would have been putting a stumbling-block in the believer’s way. The temple had a place and purpose in the Jewish economy, just as churches have a place and purpose now; and it was a pious and holy duty in the exiles, upon their return, to restore the public worship of God. Nor was it aught but a right feeling in the Jews which led them to venerate the

<sup>h</sup> Theodoreti Interp. in Es. lxxv. 15.

temple, and made them ready to sacrifice wealth and comfort, in the earnest wish once again to serve their God according to the rites of their holy law. In temporal matters they were probably far more prosperous at Babylon than they could ever hope to be in Judæa. It was a rich and populous country, fit for trade and agriculture, and they had powerful friends there, such as Daniel, and subsequently Nehemiah; most of the people, too, had been transplanted from distant homes, like themselves: but a right and noble feeling made the better portion of them content to abandon everything for their religion's sake. Neither then at Babylon, nor after the return, could a prophet have rightly blamed so praiseworthy a motive. But in Hezekiah's reign there was too good reason for the rebuke. An idolatrous spirit had possession of the people, and the reproofs addressed in the first chapter to those who trode God's courts, prove that they were no true worshippers, but came attributing some intrinsic merit to the place as distinct from the faith of the worshipper,—in the spirit, therefore, of idolatry, and not as men offering unto God a reasonable service. They prized, doubtless, its splendour and magnificence, and in the troubles which befel the land hoped to obtain deliverance by joining in its services. But they did not purpose to put away the evil of their doings from before God's eyes; they did not cease to do evil, and learn to do well. They came, therefore, as heathens might have gone to the magnificent spectacles of their religion, to please the Deity by an outward show, and not to worship in spirit and in



truth. And therefore the rebuke; and therefore, also, in these last chapters, the exposition of the true principles of all real religion, spoken in terms singularly in accordance with the words of the New Testament, where the Lord tells us that "the hour was coming when neither on Gerizim nor yet at Jerusalem should men offer any especial worship to the Father. . . . For the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." And, similarly, in describing the new Jerusalem, that is, the Christian Church, St. John says,— "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." And, as if to point to the fulfilment therein of Isaiah's prophecy, he proceeds in his very words,— "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof<sup>1</sup>." And as the New Testament thus reiterates the lessons of the Old, so does Isaiah speak in terms which seem to have caught their inspiration from the Gospel; for while God thus rejects a house built by human hands, He claims man's heart for His abode: "I will look," He says, "to the man who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at My word."

In the Christian Church, therefore, there is no temple: and in the next place, sacrifices are abolished in terms not merely express, but contemptuous. "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi. 22, 23; Isa. lx. 19.

offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol." Words could not more decisively reject the whole Mosaic ritual; and yet their effect is very much lessened by the number of expletives inserted by our translators. Omit them, and we seem to see the Prophet turning away in undisguised abhorrence from the mention of every temple offering. So that, plainly, the whole element of Judaism is to be expunged from Christianity, and its worship is to be modelled upon entirely different principles from those which were embodied in the Levitical service.

Upon this abolition of sacrifice follows immediately the rapid spread of the Christian faith: "A nation is born at once;" "as soon as Zion travailed, she hath brought forth children;" "peace comes to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: they suck, they are borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees." In old time there had never been but a very small remnant who understood the law spiritually; there were probably in all ages but very few who would not have regarded with indignation Isaiah's rejection of sacrifices, or have thought the prophets right in preferring the moral to the ceremonial part of the law. But, in Christianity, a spiritual religion was revealed, and purity and holiness required of all, as graces without which no man shall see the Lord; and at the first summons of the Apostles the world awakened to the call, and far and wide both Jew and Gentile gathered round them, and were content to give up all that they might follow Christ.

But while thus a Christian nation is born as in a day, it is not without painful throes to the Church of old. For a separation has to be made between her false children, and her true: and this is not accomplished but with pain and fiery trial. "Behold," says the Prophet, "Jehovah comes with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire, and by His sword, will Jehovah plead with all flesh: and Jehovah's slain shall be many."

But while the Jewish nation is thus tried and separated, and the great mass of the people, "Jehovah's slain," rejected from His covenant, others, like the Apostles, gather into the Church no longer Jews only, but people "of all nations and tongues, who come and see God's glory;" not, now, in a splendid ritual and majestic temple, but in the Gospel covenant of grace. It is expressly said that this ingathering is the work of "those that escape of them;" of those Jews who, when God visited their nation, were among the believing few, and not the unbelieving many; of that Church which, when the Roman armies girt the city, withdrew to the mountains. It was not the work of the Jews nationally, but of those whom the Jews cast out of their synagogues. And these, the Apostles and Evangelists of the Lord, "bring their brethren for an offering unto Jehovah out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to God's holy mountain Jerusalem." It is the picture of a countless host, such as no man can number, brought unto Christ, not in

a literal pilgrimage to Jerusalem—the Prophet’s metaphors are not to be literally understood—but won by every moral means, by all those graces by which the Apostles “approved themselves as the ministers of God;” and by the labours, and forbearance, and love unfeigned, of Christian men now.

And the Prophet, upon this, declares the third great specific difference between the two dispensations. The priesthood is no longer to be confined to the line of Aaron:—“I will take of them,” of the converts generally, “for priests and for levites, saith Jehovah.” I need scarcely say that the abolition of these three things—the temple, the sacrifice, the Aaronic priest—mark essential distinctions between the Church of old and the Church now. They teach us that a spiritual religion has been substituted in the place of one material and earthly. It is no longer a symbolical worship, it is one addressed to the hearts and consciences of men; whose High-Priest is not so by virtue of descent from any earthly lineage, but “without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but Himself the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.” I need not enlarge upon these distinctions; it does not belong to my subject: I bring them forward only as proofs that the Judaic element in the Church was absolutely to pass away.

Thus founded upon better promises, and carnal no longer, but spiritual, the Church is to last for ever, and in it there shall always be the seed of true believers. “As the new heavens, and the new earth,

which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith Jehovah; so shall your seed, and your name remain." There shall always be in the Church, God's new heaven and earth, a chosen people: it shall not have a name merely to live, but shall ever bring forth children for God's honour and service: and to them shall that name belong which Moses of old promised to the Israelites of his time as their distinguishing glory, if they would keep God's covenant, and which St. Peter claims for Christians; "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation<sup>k</sup>."

The two verses which remain describe, the one the spiritual worship of Jehovah, though under figures drawn from the Mosaic ritual; the other, the great vengeance of God upon Jerusalem, passing onwards, as in our Lord's last discourse, to the final judgment. And thus has the Prophet sketched all the great features of the Christian Church; its pure and holy worship, its spiritual sanctions, its heavenly hopes: and fittingly does such a description come from him whose especial office it was to set before God's people of old the true image of their Messiah, coming not in earthly splendour and the pomp of war, but in meek and lowly guise, to suffer and die for men's sins. To the Jews both were hard lessons: they are hard lessons still. For the pride of man revolts from the doctrine of an atonement wrought upon a Cross, and his earthly nature can only be enabled by God's Holy Spirit to prize the spiritual sanctions of the Gospel more than that material organization necessary for the

<sup>k</sup> Exod. xix. 6.

Church's usefulness and existence here. But the lessons given to the Jew speak even more plainly to the Christian, and while we value and make use of every help given us to assist our feeble natures, let our higher aim be to worship God "in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

## NOTES.

### SERMON I.

Page 3, line 18. — Most of these sermons were written before the publication of "Essays and Reviews:" and as they refer to Jewish and German criticism, rather than to anything in this country, I am spared the necessity of referring to the objections stated there against the usual interpretation of the prophecies. As, however, these objections are gathered from German writers, it will be found that most of them are treated of in these pages. I must, however, express my regret that in Dr. Williams's Essay I do not find that carefulness of statement which we have a right to expect in one whose knowledge and ability are undoubted. Not to mention his inexact translation of Isaiah ix. 6, we find him asserting, (p. 76,) that *symphonia* and *psanterion* are both Macedonian words, and his footnote would make it appear as if he rested this assertion upon the authority of Bunsen. Now the subject is one so hackneyed among the Germans, that it would seem impossible for any one acquainted with their literature to fall into any mistake about it; and yet there are no grounds whatsoever for half the statement. The sole place in which the *symphonia* is mentioned is an extract from Polybius, preserved in the "Deipnosophists" of Athenæus, and which simply mentions that this musical instrument was in use at the court of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is the *psanterin*, concerning which Gesenius throws out the conjecture, that the change of the *n* for *l*, *psanterin* for *psalterion*, (Dr. Williams's word being neither Greek nor Chaldee,) may have come from the Macedonians, who, as he candidly remarks, shared this peculiarity of interchanging *l* and *n* with the whole Dorian race. But the possibility of the name of one of these instruments having been introduced by the Dorians is a very different thing from affirming that

they were both of Macedonian origin. The Dorian race had too long been mixed up with the affairs of Asia for any one to have a right to be surprised at finding a Dorian instrument of music in use there. These "high critics" even tell us that the body-guard of David was partly composed of Dorian mercenaries, and yet it seems that the occurrence of a form common to the Macedonians with the Dorian race generally is a proof that the book in which it is found was written after Alexander's conquests! Further, the conjecture of Gesenius is itself destitute of foundation: for the merest tyro in Chaldee knows that that dialect constantly interchanges *l* and *n*. Even those ignorant of the language are aware that the Labynetus of Herodotus is the Nabonedus of Berossus: and Gesenius himself in his *Thesaurus*, under *Lamed*, in discussing this law quotes *psanterin* among numerous other instances of its prevalence. Many philologists, moreover, assert that ψάλλω with its derivatives is of Semitic, and not of Arian origin; but even if we reject this, we are not at liberty to deny the early existence of a very considerable trade between Greece and Asia, and with it the interchange of numerous words. From the Semitic race Greece even learnt her letters; and if the most ordinary articles of clothing have the same name among both races, what wonder is it if the merchandize with which they supplied one another carried its own name with it into very distant regions. Even war, when introducing new things, introduces their names with them: and these names have a wonderful vitality. Few of us now pass a day without making use of Arabic words brought home, with the articles they signify, by the Crusaders. In short, the goods imported into Asia would carry their names with them: and there is, therefore, no period so ancient as that the occurrence in the Bible of a word possibly of Greek origin need astonish us, provided it was the name of an article not of Syriac manufacture, but imported from Greece. As for the symphony, Dr. Williams, as a competent Hebrew scholar, ought to have been aware that all the best authorities in Germany since the time of Gesenius have confessed its Semitic origin, and



that the *K'tib*, the written text, is right in spelling it סִפְוִיָּה, *siphonia*, which the Greeks, who learnt the name of the instrument from the Phœnicians, corrupted into a word which conveyed a meaning to their ear. To imagine any sensible man calling a single instrument a 'concert,' and that instrument a *dudelsack*, a 'bagpipe,' is absurd. Fürst, however, *Handwörterbuch*, ii. 74, concludes that the word "is probably of Semitic origin<sup>a</sup>;" but Meier, who discusses the matter with greater fulness, and whose treatise on the foreign words in the Bible I would recommend to Dr. Williams' notice, and who, as being one of the most advanced of the Tübingen school, has certainly no leanings towards orthodoxy, has no doubt upon the matter:—"The word is undoubtedly Semitic<sup>b</sup>." And yet we are to believe that these names, 'symphony' and 'psanterin,' are of *Macedonian* origin!

Again, Dr. Williams affirms that the occurrence of such late forms as לְכִינֵי, כִּינֵי, and כִּינֵי, proves that the Chaldee of the book of Daniel must be several centuries later than that of the book of Ezra. Now it is a curious fact that there is no such word as כִּינֵי at all: it is a creation of the grammarians, like the *tip*, *tas*, *anti* of Sanscrit grammar, and the τύψω of our own school days. To the grammarian, however, it represents the simple form of the Chaldee word כִּינֵי, 'this,' which is emphatic: and as, for some unknown reason, the simple כִּינֵי never occurs, the grammarian invents it by the rules of analogy to round off his system. Dismissing, then, this fictitious word כִּינֵי, I find in Gesenius' *Thesaurus* an enumeration of thirty places in which כִּינֵי occurs: of these, fifteen are in Daniel, fourteen in Ezra, and one in Jeremiah (x. 11). It follows, therefore, that כִּינֵי is no late form; the late form really is כִּינֵי, a word of constant occurrence in the Targums: and one cannot help having an uneasy suspicion that Dr. Williams took כִּינֵי for a plural, as he thrusts it between two plurals, and treats it as if it were an exactly parallel case with them. It is much the same as if in Latin any one were to treat *illis*, *is*, and *his*, as

<sup>a</sup> "Es mag viell. semitisch sein."

<sup>b</sup> "Das Wort ist sicher semitisch."—*Wurzelwörterbuch*, p. 719.

three datives plural. I may add that Bunsen, whom Dr. Williams is reviewing, is not answerable for the assertion.

As regards the other two instances, it is true that Daniel's form of the pronominal plural is Chaldaic, while Ezra adheres more closely to the Hebraic dialect. Which is the older form I am not prepared to say. But this difference between the two writers is a fact of little moment. Fixity of spelling is a modern practice, the result of our constant use of printed books. In the mingled mass of people who dwelt at Babylon there can be little doubt that considerable dialectic variations existed contemporaneously: and what wonder if the Jewish scribes who drew up the decrees which Ezra records used the Hebraic form, while Daniel, trained in the Chaldee from his youth, followed the native manner of speaking. The interchange of *m* and *n* is a very trifling matter: for, as Gesenius in his *Thesaurus* remarks, "Of the liquids, *m* is most frequently interchanged with *n*; and as being the harsher letter is constantly softened into *n*, both at the beginning, the middle, and the end of a word." Finally, there is no proof that the plural ending in *n* is more recent than that in *m*; such assertions are but the inductions of grammarians founded upon a very narrow collection of facts. A wider knowledge dispels these assumptions. In one of these dialects we find both forms existing side by side to this day: for we read that "the Samaritan language forms the plural of masculine nouns by adding *im* to the singular, but this is constantly changed for *in*, in accordance with the Chaldee and Syriac use<sup>c</sup>." This assertion I have had brought under my own notice in the case of a very ancient manuscript of the Samaritan Targum. And, in short, I believe that the relation of these two forms of the plural to one another is not chronological, but dialectic; that both existed simultaneously, but in different branches of the Semitic race.

Page 7, line 21.—Amongst the recent acquisitions of the Bodleian is the Hebrew Lexicon of Abraham ben David, a

<sup>c</sup> Uhlemann, *Instit. Ling. Sam.*, p. 104.

work of great antiquity, being considerably older than the Lexicon of Jonah ben Gannach, hitherto the most ancient known. Its author apparently is only aware of the existence of three vowels; a fact in most curious contrast with the extreme intricacy of the Masoretic system, which endeavours to represent the sound not of the separate words, but of words combined into sentences, and pronounced with a rising inflexion at the end. I need scarcely say that such a system could only have been invented after Hebrew had ceased to be a living language: but without it the Hebrew Scriptures would have been scarcely intelligible; and though its authority is not final, it nevertheless deservedly ranks very high, yet not so as to exclude the more ancient rendering of the Septuagint. An account of this Lexicon will, I trust, shortly appear in the *Journal Asiatique*.

*Page 8, line 7.*—The oldest *Nizzachon* known is supposed, from internal evidence, to be of the date of the twelfth century, and is printed entire in Wagenseil's *Ignea Tela Satanæ*. Its argument is as follows:—“*Almah* signifies a young woman, and is the wife of Isaiah: in due time she is to bear a son, whose name Immanuel is a promise that God shall be with our arms to deliver us from Pekah and Rezin. His birth shall be followed by the immediate return of prosperity to our land, so that he shall eat butter and honey: and before he shall be old enough to distinguish between good and evil, ruin shall have overtaken both the confederate kings. The better to assure them of this deliverance, the child is also called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, i. e. ‘haste to the spoil, speed to the prey;’ which name is plainly a warlike encouragement. And by the words used of him, ‘Before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and, My mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria,’ the sense is fixed of the similar words applied to the Immanuel, and the identity established between him and Mahershalal. As the Prophet’s other son, Shear-jashub, also bore a significant name, the Prophet says, ‘Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are

for signs,' &c." In the ninth chapter, however, the *Nizzachon* considers that "Hezekiah was the child meant, and that the prophecy was fulfilled in the defeat of Sennacherib." The title of *Nizzachon* is also applied to Josef Kimchi's "Wars of the Lord;" and other instances will be found in Wolff's *Bibliotheca Heb.*, vol. i., under Lipman and Matathias; and vol. iii. p. 661.

Page 8, line 10.—The great Jewish controversial work, *Chissuk Emuna*, or "The Pillar of the Truth," was written by Rabbi Isak ben Abraham, and printed for private circulation after his death, by his disciple Josef ben Mardochai Troki, about 1681. Its existence was long carefully concealed, but at length it fell into Wagenseil's hands in the following way. He was travelling in Spain as tutor to Count Abensberg, when in an excursion from Gibraltar to Ceuta, he found large numbers of Jews assembled there from all parts of Africa, at a fair. Mixing freely with them, he so won their gratitude by the information he was able to give them concerning their compatriots in Europe, that they not only answered his questions about their condition in Africa, but finally gave him a manuscript copy of the *Chissuk Emuna*, as the choicest present in their power. Subsequently he heard that the Portuguese Jews possessed a Spanish translation of it made by one Rabbi Gabriel, but was unable, after many exertions, to obtain a copy. Upon his return home, he published it in his *Ignea Tela Satanae*, in 1705. Since that time it has frequently been reprinted by the Jews, the last edition which I have seen being Leipzig, 1857.

The preface written by Isak's disciple, to whom he had given the book upon his dying bed, affords an apt illustration of the frigid humour of the Jews. For he compares his master to his namesake the patriarch Isaac, and says that, like him, the Rabbi had two sons, the one, the gentle Jacob, being that part of the work which defends the Jews, while the other, the fierce Esau, is the second part, in which the New Testament is attacked and Christianity impugned. Of himself Isak says, "When I was young, I was much about

the person of princes and men of rank, and often heard their inconclusive reasonings. . . . And during all my life, though of humble station, I have often argued with bishops, dukes, nobles, men of high and men of low rank, and have always been listened to with civility, because I spake modestly, and used for my proofs the words of the law. And this has induced me in my retirement to put together the chief arguments which I have used in old time, that they may still be useful to the Jewish cause."

The general character of his reasonings may be gathered from the following specimens. In the first section of the first part, or "The Apology for the Law," he objects that the argument from prophecy is inconclusive in four particulars:—1. As regards our Lord's genealogy, nothing being known of Mary, an obscure virgin, and Joseph being confessedly not His father: even Joseph's genealogy, he adds, is most uncertain, the two Christian witnesses, Matthew and Luke, not agreeing. 2. As to His work: for Zechariah, ix. 10, foretells, "He shall speak peace unto the nations," whereas Jesus says, "Think not that I am come to establish peace upon earth;" Mal. iv. 6, "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children," but Jesus says that "He came to set a man at variance with his father;" Psalm lxxii. 11, "Kings shall fall down before Him," but Jesus "came not to be served, but to serve." 3. The time. Messiah's birth is to be "in the last days," (Isa. ii. 2; Hos. iii. 5); during the wars of Gog and Magog, (Ezek. xxxviii. 8); neither of which were true of "the Nazarene." 4. Unfulfilled prophecies, such, for instance, as that Messiah will establish one kingdom, (Dan. ii. 44,) in which the Jewish law shall prevail, (Isa. lii. 1,) and the Mosaic feasts be observed, (Zech. xiv. 16). The Jews shall everywhere be venerated, (Ib. viii. 23); all idolatry shall cease, (Ib. xiii. 2); and the Jews especially serve God without sin, (Deut. xxx. 6; Zeph. iii. 13): universal peace shall follow the destruction of Gog and Magog, (Ezek. xxxix. 9); beasts of prey even shall change their nature, (Hos. ii. 18; Isa. xi. 6); grief shall cease, (Ib. lxv. 16, 19); the Israelites shall possess the gift

of prophecy, (Ezek. xxxvii. 26—28; Joel ii. 28); and God shall dwell among them, (Joel iii. 17).

In his sixth chapter Isak enumerates many more unfulfilled prophecies, such as the cleaving of the Mount of Olives; the bursting forth of two rivers from the sanctuary, with trees upon their banks bearing fruit every month; the drying up of the Red Sea, and the Euphrates; the annual visit of all men to Jerusalem; the universal empire of the Jews, (Isa. xlix. 23); the general observance of their religious rites, the reunion of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and the redivision of Palestine among the twelve tribes. He also argues, that in the vision of the image in Dan. ii. the miry clay is the Mahomedan empire, and that consequently it must be fused with the Roman before Messiah can come.

The largest portion, however, of the work is taken up with the examination of the texts usually brought forward by Christians in controversy with the Jews, and the study of his answers would be of great use to any one who really wished to know the grounds upon which the Jews rest their defence. He argues in it that the law can give life, for the observance of its precepts is meritorious, and the breach of them can be atoned for by repentance. Its sanctions he affirms to have been spiritual, and not temporal only. He asks, On what grounds Christians keep some of its precepts, and reject others? Among those observed he mentions the forbidding to marry within the prohibited degrees, of which he enumerates six, viz., mother, step-mother, sister, niece, daughter, and step-daughter. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah he examines very elaborately, and argues that Israel is the Servant of Jehovah, and that its sufferings in its present Edomitish captivity are vicarious, not being the punishment of its own sins, but for the healing of the Gentiles. The utter rejection of Israel, asserted by Christians from Jer. xvii. 4, &c., is an impossibility, for God's threatenings, equally with His promises, are conditional; and besides, Israel has equally absolute promises of a restoration, and of becoming the universal religion.

Isak further comments upon the alleged misuse by Chris-

tians of the prophecies. Thus Rachel's weeping for Ephraim carried into captivity at the deportation of the ten tribes is applied to the slaughter of the Innocents at Bethlehem, which was in Judah, and therefore its inhabitants were not children of Rachel, but of Leah. Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, (Zech. i. 1, 7,) is confounded with the son of Jehoiada, and Abiathar put for Ahimelech. Stephen's speech, again, he says is replete with errors, while Paul's misquotations of Scripture are especially numerous.

Nor are Christians more fair to their own books; for they have added to the New Testament doctrines which it does not contain, as (1) the Trinity, (2) the divinity of the Son, (3) the worship of images, and (4) the duty of hating Jews: while they neglect what it does teach, as (1) the selling of their goods to give to the poor, (2) loving their enemies, (3) the refraining from things strangled.

One instance of his constructive method may suffice, viz., his interpretation of Zech. xi. in opposition to Matt. xxvii. 9. The staff Beauty, he says, is Zerubbabel, and Bands the Maccabees, who had no right to the throne, but did feed the flock. The three shepherds cut off in one month are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, who died within a few days of one another. The thirty pieces of silver are the thirty just men, who flourished after Nehemiah, and who are put into the treasury. [He reads, therefore, *ויצר* for *ויציר*.] Herod, who is the foolish shepherd, destroys the staff Bands, while Agrippa, the idle shepherd, leaves his flock to go to Rome, and so brings upon his nation the invasion of Titus. Like, however, most controversialists, Rabbi Isak is more successful in stating objections speciously, and finding difficulties, than in constructing a system for himself.

*Page 8, line 24.*—Isak's exposition of the sixty-five years is rendered impossible by the word *בְּעֵינֵיךָ*, 'in yet sixty-five years,' 'in sixty-five years from this time.' The received explanation is that given by Archbishop Usher, who considers that the prophecy was not fulfilled entirely at the deportation of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser, but at the in-

roduction of new inhabitants by Esarhaddon, when the land altogether ceased to belong to Israel. Grotius would read six for sixty, "within six and five years," i. e. within eleven years; and adds, "At Hebræi, ut codicum suorum fidem tueantur, hos lxxv. annos retro trahunt ad id tempus, quo Amosus contra Syriam et Israelitas vaticinari cœpit."

*Page 12, line 15.*—Rabbi Isak does not stand alone in considering that Messiah will die; for Maimonides, *Porta Mosis*, p. 159, says, "Messiah shall die, and after him shall reign his son, and his grandsons; for in Isa. xlii. 4 God shews that his death is to follow his victory." Nor are the Jews content with this, but have busied themselves with calculating the years of his life. R. Eliezer argues that he will die aged 40, from Ps. xcv. 10; but Ribbi concludes, from Ps. lxxii. 5, that he will live at least three generations. Other calculations are not so moderate, for R. Abimas calculates that the Messiah will reign seven thousand years; for in Isaiah lxii. 5 it is written, "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee:" but a bridegroom rejoices for seven days, and a day of God is a thousand years. Numerous other calculations will be found in Genebrardi, *Hebr. Breve Chron.*, p. 83, ed. 1572.

*Page 12, line 16.*—The Jews argue that Messiah shall have children from Isa. liii. 10 and Ps. lxxxix. 29; but in their uncontroversial works they constantly explain the term *seed* as we do metaphorically of *disciples*. So in the *Bereshith Rabba*, on Eccles. xi. 6, "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand," R. Akiba says that it is a command to make disciples both in our youth and our old age: "for thou knowest not which God will account to thee, or whether both alike may be good."

*Page 14, line 30.*—Besides the shifting of ground in the same commentator in making Isa. vii. 14 refer to one person, and ch. ix. 6 to another, the variations of interpreters in explaining the former text alone are instructive: thus Trypho



says that the *Almah* is the mother of Hezekiah; Abravanel that she was either the wife or the daughter of Ahaz; Rabbi Lusitanus, Bauer, Isenbiehl, &c., a maiden pointed out by Isaiah; Abenezra, R. Isak, &c., Isaiah's wife; Hitzig, Isaiah's first wife, Shear-jashub's mother; Gesenius, Isaiah's second wife, married upon the death of the first; David Kimchi and Salomon Jarchi, Isaiah's wife, but at the time of the prophecy still a virgin unripe for marriage; Eichhorn, an ideal virgin; Meier, the city of Jerusalem. Bunsen's view is perhaps worth even quoting at length. "The *Almah*," he says, "is any young marriageable woman, and here, Isaiah's betrothed. His eldest son was Shear-jashub, his second Immanuel, his third, Mahershalal. The essence of the prediction consisted in the birth of a boy, and not of a girl<sup>d</sup>!"

Page 15, line 2.—The idea of the text having been corrupted by Jerome was first started by Salomon Jarchi, who makes the first six names refer to God, and the last two to Hezekiah. Besides the absurdity of this supposition, we have, *à contra*,—

1. The Chaldee paraphrase, which is as follows:—"The prophet said to the house of David, Because a babe is born for us, a child is given us, and He hath taken the law upon Him to keep it, and His name shall be called from of old Wonderful in Counsel, God-man, Existing for Eternity, Messiah, whose peace shall be multiplied upon us in His days."

It will be noticed that the paraphrast renders the words *יָלַד לָנוּ בְּבִיר* verbatim by the corresponding Chaldee words *יָלַד לָנוּ בְּבִיר*, but the latter word, like *vir* among the Latins, had come to signify *man* merely, having lost its original meaning of strength.

2. The Peschito, or Syriac version, which was made directly from the Hebrew without the help of the Septuagint, and renders,—“Because a child is born to us, and a son is given us, and His government shall be upon His shoulder, and

<sup>d</sup> *Bibelwerk, in loc.*

His name is called Wonderful and Counsellor, God mighty of worlds (or eternity), the Prince of Peace."

Other ancient authorities are also entirely on the same side.

*Page 23, line 3.*—The words of this text, Jer. xxxi. 22, literally are, "Nekabah, the female, woman absolutely, shall compass Geber, the strong one, man:" of which a derivative, *Gibbor*, is the word used in Isa. ix. 6, *El Gibbor*, "the mighty God."

*Ibid., line 14.*—The same fact is often noticeable among the Rabbis, namely, that while they explain away the clear declarations of Scripture, they find its doctrines in trifles. Thus in Isa. ix. 7, "to multiply the government and the peace," in Rabbinic Bibles לְמַרְבֵּה is written with the mem closed instead of open: and this the Rabbis almost universally explain of the Messiah being born of a virgin. R. Berachias infers the same from Messiah being called in Zech. vi. 12 a Branch, because a branch is not produced from seed. And the same conclusion is drawn from Isa. liii. 2, where Messiah is called "a root out of a dry ground," and from Ps. cx. 3, which R. Berachias translates, "Thy children shall be born unto thee, as the dew from the dawning morn."

A different interpretation of the closed mem in Isa. ix. 7 is given by R. Tanchumim, who says, "Why is every medial mem open, but this closed? Because the holy and blessed God wished to make Hezekiah the Messiah, and Sennacherib Gog and Magog. But the מִדַּת דִּוְרַיִן, the measure of justice, said, O Lord of the world, what means this? David, who spake so many songs and psalms of praise before Thee, Thou didst not make the Messiah, and wilt Thou make Hezekiah the Messiah, for whom Thou hast wrought all these signs, but who has not spoken a psalm before Thee? And the Bathkol, the voice of God, answered, My secret is my secret." The meaning of this, separated from the enigmatical style of the Jews, seems to be, that Gog and Magog are not to be understood of any definite nation, but of the op-

posers of God generally; and that Hezekiah had less claims even than David to be the Messiah.

Galatinus quotes from the "Revealer of Secrets," published in quarto at Nürnberg, 1605, a most extraordinary explanation attributed to R. Hakkodesh, i.e. R. Jehuda, fifth in descent from the Symeon (as is supposed) who held the infant Christ in his arms. By a transposition of the letters he makes the words "to multiply the government" mean "the lady Mary." But the author of this work, J. C. Otto, a converted Jew, seems to have intended only to mystify Christians, and his whole work is replete with fictions.

*Page 24, line 20.*—Ewald's words are taken from his *Jahrbuch der Biblischen Wissenschaft* for 1858, p. 71:—"Die Tübingischen gelehrten albernheiten wie sie sich vorzüglich auch in bezug auf die Evangelien äusserten und noch äussern, gegen die Deutsche wissenschaft in Auslande einen sehr erklärlichen widerwillen haben erregt."

*Ibid., line 24.*—The word *almah*, עלמה, comes from a root signifying 'covered,' 'concealed,' and is taken by Hebrew scholars of the old school as referring to the separation of maidens from the company of men, and by those of the new school *de signis pubertatis*<sup>c</sup>. Its occurrence in the masculine is rare; it is found nevertheless in 1 Sam. xvii. 56, "whose son the stripling is," עלם, and in 1 Sam. xx. 22, where it is equivalent to נער, 'boy,' used in the preceding verse; but is incorrectly translated 'young man,' the sense being *servant*, a usage it shares with *παῖς*, *puer*, *garçon*, &c., the idiom of all languages employing the term *boy*, and generally also *maid*, in the sense of *servant*. And so Freytag says of this very word, "אֲלֵמָה *adolescens, tum de servo.*" The feminine is more common; thus Rebecca in Gen. xxiv. 16 is called בערה, 'damsel,' but in ver. 43, עלמה, 'virgin.' In Exod. ii. 8 Miriam is called an *almah*. So in Ps. lxxviii. 25, the damsels playing with timbrels are *almahs*, the custom of virgins taking part in

<sup>c</sup> Meier, *Hebr. Wurzelwörterbuch*, p. 373.

religious processions being well known. Again, in Cant. i. 3 we have, "Therefore do the *almahs*, virgins, love thee;" and ib. vi. 8, "There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and *almahs* without number," the latter being the virgins in attendance upon the two previous classes.

The other passage in which it occurs is that on which the Jews depend for their interpretation, viz. Prov. xxx. 19, "The way of a man with a maid." But even were we to grant in this place the Jewish explanation, which is by no means a certain one, it would not invalidate the general meaning of the word, for it would simply signify 'one by habit and repute a virgin.' And, in fact, euphemistic appellations are in all ages and countries given by the common modesty of mankind both to the persons guilty of the sin referred to, and to the sin itself. And again, no one doubts the meaning of *virgo*, yet Horace speaks of "virgines nuptæ," and Virgil apostrophizes Pasiphae,—

"Ah! *virgo infelix*."

So, again, of *παρθένος*, no one doubts its meaning; yet Homer says,—

οὗς τέκεν Ἀστυόχη, δόμφ' Ἀκτορος Ἀζείδαιο  
παρθένος αἰδοίη,<sup>f</sup>—

and he uses the term because her children were *παρθένιοι*.

So Sophocles makes Hercules say of Iole, τοῖς ἐμοῖς πλευροῖς ὁμοῦ κλιθεῖσαν,—

τὴν Εὐρυτείαν οἶσθα δῆτα παρθένον<sup>g</sup>;

And similarly in Hebrew, the word *bethulah*, which no one denies to mean *virgin*, is used in Joel i. 8 for a *young widow*.

In general the distinction between the words *na'arah*, *almah*, and *bethulah*, is as follows:—*na'arah* is a young woman whether married or unmarried; *bethulah* is a virgin, whether young or old; *almah* is both young and a virgin<sup>h</sup>. Kimchi, however, in his *Liber radicum* says that *almah* simply means *na'arah*, 'girl,' and Abulwalid and Saadias

<sup>f</sup> Il. ii. 514.

<sup>g</sup> Trach. 1219.

<sup>h</sup> Müller, *Judenthum*, p. 636; Galatinus, *De Arcanis*, p. 531.

agree with him : but as Jews they do but give the tradition which began in the second century, and which the renegade Aquila first made public in his version, the object of which was to supersede the Septuagint and weaken the argument for Christianity deduced from the prophetic books. His rendering is, Ἴδου ἡ νεάνις ἐν γαστρὶ συλλαμβάνει καὶ τίκτει υἶδον καὶ καλέσεις ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ. On the other hand, the sense which they ascribe to the root of the word, that namely of concealing and hiding, plainly points to the old custom of closely guarding unmarried maidens : so in the Greek Anthology they complain,—

ἡμῖν δ' οὐδὲ φάος λεύσσειν θέμις, ἀλλὰ μελάρθοις  
κρυπτόμεναι ζοφέραις φροντίσι τηκόμεναι.

And of a similar custom prevailing among the Jews we read in Cant. iv. 12,—

“A garden enclosed is my sister, my betrothed :  
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”

I add Jerome's words at length :—“The usual term in Hebrew for virgin is *bethulah*, for which Isaiah here substitutes *almah*, which the Jews translate ‘a young woman,’ except the Septuagint, which renders it ‘the virgin.’ The Jews say, moreover, that *almah* is an ambiguous term, signifying either a young woman, or one living in secret, *absccondita*, that is, ἀποκρυφή. And so Aquila renders *almah*, where in Genesis it is applied to Rebecca, not by ‘girl’ or ‘young woman,’ but by *absccondita*. We say, therefore, that *almah* not only signifies a virgin, but something more ;—*cum ἐπιτάσει*—a virgin living concealed, and secret, never exposed to the look of young men, but guarded by the watchful care of her parents.” He then adds the remark, that while *bethulah* may signify a virgin of any age, *almah* can only signify one just arrived at puberty.

The conclusion of Meier, to whom I have referred in the text, as being probably the best Hebraist of the Tübingen school, is as follows :—“A married maiden, a young married woman, in which sense Gesenius and others take it, the word nowhere strictly means, though even were an instance found, it would give no more difficulty than the similar use of

παρθένος, *virgo*, בְּרִיּוּתָהּ. . . . This latter word, *bethulah*, signifies a virgin with respect to her civil position<sup>1</sup>, as kept separate from the male members of the family, and carries with it no idea of modesty and bashfulness like the term *almah*."

His own explanation of the prophecy is marked by his usual ability and audacity:—"The centre of the prophecy is the name, 'God with us,' with a *community* therefore; that is, with the Jewish Church, conscious of God's presence within it. The future mother is a *virgin*, and yet *with child*; so clearly an impossibility, that every one at once feels that the language is symbolical. The mother, therefore, is the ideal community, the holy city, called now the daughter of Zion; and then, again, the virgin, the daughter of Zion, (Is. xxxvii. 22.) Elsewhere, again, the virgin, the daughter of Judah, (Lam. i. 15,) and the virgin of Israel. So, again, in Judith Jerusalem is called Bethuliah, 'the Virgin of God,' implying the notion that she shall never be violated by the hand of the enemy; and such is Isaiah's meaning here."

Even Meier, however, in ch. ix. 6 sees the promise of a Messiah, but denies that the Immanuel is identical with the child "Wonderful." "There is, however," he says, "a certain connection between them; for Isaiah mounts up step by step from the immediate to the remoter development. The Immanuel is the sign of God's presence among His distressed people; so much so, that in ch. viii. Immanuel is God Himself present with His people, and therefore their country is 'the breadth of His land.' And finally, by the divine protection out of night and darkness a new light shines, and Messiah with His wondrous attributes is born for the people."

I may add that, like Meier, most of the German commentators grant that *almah* means a virgin, though each has his own way of getting rid of the supernatural element. Thus Maurer says it means a virgin whom the prophet was about to marry. Umbreit, the virgin, pointing to some chance maiden among the bystanders—within such a time as the

<sup>1</sup> "Es bezeichnet die Jungfrau ihrer bürgerlichen Stellung nach."—*Der Proph. Jes., in loc.*

virgin standing there could conceive. So Bunsen, *Die Jungfrau da. Eichhorn, Paulus, &c.*, an ideal virgin, within the time that an ideal virgin could marry and have a son. Ewald, a virgin, i.e. one neither too young nor too old to marry. Hofmann, a virgin, but in the vocative case; 'O virgin, i.e. O house of David, as yet unmarried of the Lord, thou shalt see thy promises fulfilled, and have a son.' See also the note to page 14.

Drechsler, *Der Proph. Jes.*, i. 287, says that *almah* means *virgo nubilis*, and *bethulah*, *virgo illibata*; and asks, "Why did Isaiah call the Messiah's mother *almah*, and not *bethulah*? It was because all that was high in rank and of noble birth in Judæa had apostatized from God's covenant; and therefore the Saviour did not come in princely guise, but in poverty; not as a hero riding on a war-horse, but meek and lowly, upon an ass's foal. Nor did He gather round Him the Pharisees and learned scribes to form His court as the Priest-king of Jerusalem, but publicans and fishermen. The world He saved not by life and conquest, but by death and submission. And equally His followers must be "the servants of all." Now it is in Isaiah that prophecy first takes this direction. The Deliverer of the realm is a new-born infant, the government rests upon the shoulder of a child. And that child is born of an *almah*. He is not the royal offspring of the queen, not even the son of a married wife; but of one whom law and propriety withdraw from this office. God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and things which are not to bring to nought things which are. It is therefore not the *ברולה*, the *virgo illibata*, but the *עלמה*, the *virgo nubilis*, who brings forth the Messiah." With this interpretation Drechsler connects Isa. liv. 4, "the shame of thy unmarriedness," *עלומיך*.

Page 26, line 31.—According to the Talmud the whole prophecy relating to Mahershalal must be taken spiritually; for quoting the words of Isa. viii. 2, it says, "What has Uriah to do with Zechariah the son of Barachiah?" (Our version reads Jerebechiah, but the Septuagint, the Peschito,

and the Vulgate all read Barachiah, with the Talmud.) "For Uriah," the Talmud proceeds, "lived in the times of the first temple, as you may read in Jer. xxvi. 20, but Zechariah in those of the second temple, Zech. i. 1. Why then does Isaiah mention them both together? It is that we may be sure that as the prophecy of Uriah, who spake of the desolation of the holy land, has been fulfilled, so shall also the prophecy in Zech. viii. 4., &c., of its restoration equally be accomplished." The Talmud, therefore, regards the whole account as allegorical, and so far contradicts the literal interpretation of later times.

*Page 28, line 10.*—"Von Kase und Honig nahrt man sich da, wo man nicht den Boden ackerbauend bewirthshaftet, sondern nomadisch lebend von demjenigen sich erhalt was die Heerden, und was Feld und Wald geben." Drechsler, *in loc.*, whose commentary, among many others, proves that Germany has scholars quite able to contend with the Rationalists upon their own ground. We may add that the expression in Exodus, "a land flowing with milk and honey," is a proof that the Israelites were then living a nomad life, whereas the "higher critics" would have us believe that the Pentateuch was written in the days of Solomon, when the people were settled in towns, and agriculture prevailed.

## SERMON II.

*Page 33, line 18.*—Among those who grant a Messianic interpretation are Dathe, Michaelis, Döderlein, Koppe, Plüschke, Eichhorn, Kuinöl, Herder, von der Palm, Rosenmüller, Umbreit, Hengstenberg, Maurer, Hitzig, Ewald, Drechsler, Meier, Knobel, Reinke, &c. Of course, many of these names immediately suggest that the writers would not grant the fulfilment of the prophecy in our Lord. Among those who deny a Messianic interpretation are Grotius, Hensler, Paulus, Hendewerk, Jahn, Gesenius, and Bunsen.

*Page 38, line 18.*—"Galilee of the nations" properly signifies "the circle of the heathen," the heathen march, or



border. Subsequently the latter word was omitted, and the district was simply called "the circle" Galilee. We find it as early as the days of Joshua, (chap. xx. 7,) but probably limited to a much narrower extent of country than it contained in our Lord's time, when it included the four tribes of Issachar, Zebulon, Naphthali, and Asher. We also find the plural in the book of Joshua, (chap. xiii. 2,) in the sense of marches, or borders; "the borders of the Philistines."

Page 48, line 23.—The constant striving of the German school after novelty is well exemplified here by Meier, who for  $\epsilon\omega\varsigma$ , 'eternity,' Father of eternity, suggests  $\mu\alpha\tau\upsilon\varsigma$ , 'witness.' 'Father,' he adds, is a title of honour, and therefore Father-of-witness, or of-testimony, may mean 'the protector of the law.' In fact, it is to be borne in mind that it does not follow from a text or a translation having been disputed by the Germans, that therefore it is *disputable*. A reputation for cleverness can be best earned among them by attacking something which everybody else grants. And as each new aspirant after celebrity must find some fresh opportunity of distinguishing himself, it follows that in the long run every tenet, and text, and version must be challenged. But it is generally understood among them that these efforts of ingenuity are not to be too seriously understood.

## SERMON III.

Page 64, line 14.—As usual, there is no settled interpretation among the chiefs of the neologist school in their treatment of this prophecy, but every commentator offers his own novelty. Thus, for instance, Koppe argues that the text is corrupt, and says that chaps. x. 17—23, 28—34, xi., xii., are a forgery, the work of some later seer, and refer to the invasion of the land by the Chaldees under Nebuchadnezzar. He leaves Isaiah, however, in possession of chap. x. 5—16, 24—27.

Vater says that the whole prophecy was written in Manasseh's time, and refers to the deportation to Babylon.

Jungmann, and some of the older Jews<sup>k</sup>, explain it of Zerubbabel. Abenezra, Grotius, Paulus, &c., apply it to Hezekiah. On the other hand, Beckhaus, Jahn, Gesenius, Hitzig, and others, defend the authenticity of the whole prophecy: Kuinöl, Dereser, Jahn, and a multitude of others, apply it to our Lord; while Eichhorn, Bauer, De Wette, Gesenius, Hitzig, Ewald, Knobel, Bunsen, &c., refer it to an ideal Messiah.

Page 71, line 8.—Freytag gives *vibravit hastam*, and *elatus, altus fuit*, as different meanings of  $\overline{\text{حَطَر}}$ , but does not discuss their connection. Possibly  $\overline{\text{حَطَر}}$ <sup>sr</sup> may have signified 'a spear-handle,' the wood of a spear, and hence the sense of brandishing. These two words are of rare occurrence in Arabic, but the adjective  $\overline{\text{حَطَر}}$ <sup>s</sup> 'great,' 'high,' 'noble,' is of daily use.

Page 72, line 1.—The word  $\overline{\text{עֲנַי}}$ , 'a hewn-down trunk,' (*arbor succisa*, Kimchi,) in Isa. xi. 1, is from the same root as  $\overline{\text{עֲנַיִם}}$ , 'the lopped branches,' in Isa. x. 33, as is shewn by Gesenius in his *Thesaurus*. In this place, as so often is the case in our Version, the unskilfulness with which the prophecies have been divided into chapters obscures the whole meaning of the passage.

#### SERMON IV.

Page 91, line 29.—The manner in which Isaiah always regards Babylon, and not Nineveh, as the centre of the heathen world, and foretells that the treasures of Jerusalem must be carried there into captivity, is as remarkable a fact as his mentioning Cyrus by name as the conqueror of Babylon. There are some very good remarks upon this in Stier's *Jesaias*

<sup>k</sup> Cf. Theodoret. in xi. 10.

*nicht Pseudo-Jesaias, Einleitung*, p. xxxvi. We may add, that Babylon only became the capital in Esarhaddon's time, towards the end of Isaiah's life.

*Page 93, line 6.*—Hieron., *Præf. ad Es. ad Paulam*. In his Epistle to Paulinus he also says, "Non prophetiam mihi videtur texere Esaias sed evangelium." Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, xviii. 29, says much the same:—"Esaias ergo inter illa, quæ iniqua arguit, et justa præcepit, et peccatorum mala futura prædixit, etiam de Christo et ecclesia, h. e. de Rege et ea, quam condidit, civitate, multo plura quam cæteri prophetavit: ita ut a quibusdam Evangelista quam Propheta potius diceretur."

*Page 94, line 3.*—The proof adduced in favour of Isaiah's life having been prolonged into Manasseh's days, is the notice in 2 Chron. xxxii. 32, that Isaiah wrote an account of Hezekiah's life and actions.

*Ibid, line 12.*—Though Isaiah had withdrawn from the affairs of State, it by no means follows that his mental activity had ceased. Prophecy was, in the truest sense, the *national literature*, and while it was perpetually in opposition to the civil power, and even to the external rites of the Mosaic ritual, it exercised a constantly growing influence over the mass of the people. And in this influence is to be found the explanation of the fact, that on the return from Babylon it was no longer the descendants of David who exercised the supreme power, but the priests and prophets. Of this written school of prophecy Isaiah was by no means the founder, but he vastly increased its influence; and in these last chapters we have, so to speak, his *esoteric* writings, entrusted to its safe keeping, and intended for its constant study.

*Page 100, line 3.*—The critics who dispute the genuineness of the last twenty-seven chapters are compelled by their own arguments to include also in their condemnation most

of the earlier portion, especially chaps. xiii. 1—xiv. 23; xv., xvi.; xxi. 1—10; xxiii.; xxiv.—xxvii.; xxxiv., xxxv.; and xxxvi.—xxxix. An able defence of the authenticity of these passages may be seen in Reinke, *Die Messianischen Weissagungen*, vol. ii. pp. 483—556.

Ewald contents himself with rejecting chaps. xii. 2—14, 23; xxi. 1—10; xxiv.—xxvii.: but to atone for this moderation, he exercises his critical faculties in detecting interpolations in the last twenty-seven chapters, and leaves the Pseudo-Isaiah as bare as the real one.

*Ibid.*, line 13.—Both Eichhorn and Ewald grant, for instance, that chaps. lvi. 10—lvii. 21 must have been written before the exile; but the form of the prophecy (cf. page 129) renders it an impossibility to remove this passage from its place. Moreover, just the same arguments apply to ch. lxxv.

Page 120, line 14.—Passages in which Isaiah repeats the same word in both portions of the parallelism are,—in the first part, xi. 5; xiv. 4; xv. 1, 8, &c.; in the second, xlii. 9; xliv. 3; lix. 10.

Page 121, line 9.—Gesenius, in his *Thesaurus*, enumerates eleven or twelve passages in which ‘to be called’ signifies ‘to be;’ and every one of them is taken from the two portions of Isaiah. I think, however, that Zech. viii. 3, “Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth,” might fairly be added to the list; but this, again, is but an imitation of Isa. i. 26.

## SERMON V.

Page 129, line 9.—This triple division has been, I think, universally received since the publication of Rückert’s work, *Die Propheten übersetzt und erklärt*, Leipzig, 1831. Of these parts the first has most peculiarities, Babylon being mentioned in it four times, the Chaldæans five, Cyrus twice by name besides allusions to him, and Bel and Nebo once,—all

of which entirely disappear in the other two parts. In the second part the Prophet is chiefly occupied with the office of the Messiah, to whom in the first he had only once directly referred in chap. xlii. 1—9. In the third the Messiah is only briefly alluded to, whereas the glory of the Church is described at large, especially in chap. lx., which has nothing corresponding to it in the other two portions.

*Page 141, line 28.*—This fancy of Saadia Gaon's comes to us at second-hand, through Aben Ezra, who, in his commentary on Isa. lii. 13, says, "R. Saadia Hagggaon understood by the 'Servant of Jehovah' the Prophet Jeremiah, arguing that the words 'He shall sprinkle many nations' referred to the outpourings of prophecy by his mouth, and that 'He shall grow up as a tender plant' pointed to the fact that Jeremiah was very young when he entered upon the prophetic office, and that consequently his tone at first is very humble. So, in chap. xviii. 20, he speaks of himself as 'interceding for the people,' which is equivalent to 'bearing their sins!' So, in chap. xi. 19, he says, 'I was like a lamb brought to the slaughter,' which was the fulfilment of Isa. liii. 7! And lastly, in chap. xl. 5 we read, 'The captain of the guard gave him victuals, and let him go,' which adequately accomplishes the words, 'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.'"

Any one who reads this schoolmaster's own arguments will cease to wonder that no second Jew was ever found to accept his conclusion, and will dismiss him with the same summary contempt as Aben Ezra, or Abravanel, who says, "I see no one verse which can be referred to Jeremiah. How shall he be extolled, and be very high? When did kings close their mouths in his presence? How did he bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows? In short, this explanation is entirely erroneous, and supported by no Scriptural authority."

## SERMON VI.

*Page 163, line 9.*—Upon the question whether the idea of atonement by suffering is innate in man or not, the reader may consult Kreuzer, *Symbolik*, ii. 270; Buttman, *Mythos von Heracles*; Lassaulx, *Linosklage*. For the Jews it certainly was contained in the theory of sacrifice; but when, after the return from exile, their obedience to the law degenerated into mere pride of it, all ideas of a suffering Messiah became hateful to them. Their early prophets and psalmists, however, entertained juster views.

*Ibid., line 28.*—*Translation of the Targum of Jonathan.*

Isa. lii. 13—liii. 12.

- lii. 13. "Behold, My Servant the Messiah shall prosper:  
He shall be high, and great, and strong exceedingly."
14. "While the house of Israel long time hoped for Him  
Their aspect was dark among the nations:  
And their glory inferior to that of the sons of men."
15. "So shall He scatter many nations;  
Kings shall be silent at Him;  
They shall lay their hands upon their mouth:  
For that which none had related to them they have seen;  
And what they had not heard they have understood  
thoroughly."
- liii. 1. "Who hath believed this our message?  
And the strength of the mighty arm of Jah, to whom now  
is it revealed?"
2. "And the righteous shall be magnified before Him;  
Lo! like young plants in blossom, and as a tree that puts  
forth its roots beside the streams of waters,  
So shall the holy generation be multiplied in the land that  
was emptied of it.  
Its aspect is not a common aspect (literally, *profane*, as  
opposed to sacred),  
Nor its fear that of (i.e. inspired by) an ordinary person:  
But its glory shall be the glory of holiness:  
So that every one that shall see it shall look close at it."
3. "Therefore shall He be despised,

- But shall abolish the glory of all kingdoms :  
 They shall be powerless and distressed.  
 He is as a man of sorrows, and prepared for sicknesses ;  
 And it was as though there was the taking away of the  
 face of His glory from us despised and not esteemed.”
4. “ Therefore shall He pray for our sins ;  
 And our iniquities shall on His account be forgiven :  
 Though we be regarded as bruised ;  
 Smitten from before God, and afflicted.”
5. “ And He shall build up the holy house, which was profaned  
 because of our sins ; was delivered up because of our  
 iniquities :  
 And by His teaching shall peace be multiplied upon us,  
 And when we obey His words our sins shall be for-  
 given us.”
6. “ All we were scattered like sheep ;  
 We had departed each to his own way ;  
 But the will of Jah was to forgive us all our sins for His  
 sake.”
7. “ He prayed, and was answered ;  
 And He opened not His mouth again, because He was  
 accepted :  
 He shall deliver up the mighty among the Gentiles as  
 a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep that is silent  
 before her shearer :  
 And there shall be none before Him who shall open his  
 mouth to speak a word.”
8. “ From chastisements and punishment He shall gather (unto  
 Him) our captivity :  
 And the miracles that shall be wrought for us in His day,  
 who can narrate ?  
 For He shall take away the dominion of the Gentiles from  
 the land of Israel :  
 The sins which My people have committed, shall overtake  
 them, (the Gentiles).”
9. “ He shall deliver up the wicked to Gehenna ;  
 And the rich in wealth which they had gotten by violence  
 unto the death of perdition ;  
 That the workers of sin may not be established,  
 Nor speak treacheries in their mouth.”
10. “ And it was the will of Jah to melt in the furnace and

purify the remnant of His people, to cleanse their soul from sin :

They shall see the kingdom of their Messiah ;

They shall have many sons and daughters ;

They shall prolong their days,

And those who perform the law of God shall by His good pleasure prosper."

11. "From the slavery of My people shall He liberate their soul ;

They shall see retribution falling upon their enemies :

They shall be satisfied with the prey of their kings.

In His wisdom shall He justify the just, that He may make many obey His law :

And He shall pray for their sins."

12. "Therefore will I divide Him the-spoil of many Gentiles, and the riches of their fortified towns :

He shall divide a prey because He delivered His soul unto death, and made the rebellious subject to His law.

And He shall intercede for the sins of many :

And for His sake pardon is granted to the rebellious."

In this paraphrase it is important to observe that its extreme unfaithfulness is the result not of views antagonistic to any other explanation, but of its embodying the current theology of Jonathan's time. While in common with every ancient authority it refers the prophecy to the Messiah, it carefully separates from Him every word of humiliation. The "marring of visage" is applied to the Israelites wasting away in their long expectation of His coming. They it is who are "despised and not esteemed," because His glorious face is still withheld. The plural number is constantly substituted for the singular, wherever there is any epithet of grief or shame, as though it applied to the people, and not to the Messiah. Sometimes even it is the temple of Jerusalem, as in ver. 5, which is profaned and delivered up. That He does not open His mouth is because His slightest word is answered: the lamb led to slaughter is the Gentile world; and it is their yoke which is taken away from the land of Israel; whose enemies are to be delivered up to ruin, while they, purified by chastisement, are to see the kingdom of



the Messiah, and enjoy a complete and final triumph. As the Targum of Jonathan was written at a time anterior to the birth of our Saviour, it is a proof how carefully the Jewish doctors in their teaching had eliminated from Scripture every expression referring to the humiliation of the Messiah, and explains the difficulty felt by the Apostles and people generally, at reconciling our Lord's low estate and life of suffering with their one-sided interpretation of the prophetic writings.

*Page 178, line 14.*—Another proof they deduce from Isa. xxxii. 20, where the ox is Messiah-ben-Josef, to whom belongs the prophecy in Deut. xxxiii. 17; while the ass is Messiah-ben-David, to whom belongs Zech. ix. 9. Most of these proofs are from the *Bereshith Rabba*. The passage in the Babylonian Talmud respecting Messiah-ben-Josef will be found in *Tract. Sukka*, fol. 52, col. 1.

*Page 180, line 3.*—The war of Gog and Magog forms so essential a portion of the Jewish system of prophetic interpretation, that it may be interesting to quote a passage concerning it from the Jerusalem Talmud, which treating of the Pentateuch, says that the prophecy of Eldad and Medad in the camp was as follows:—At the very end of days Gog and Magog and their forces shall go up to Jerusalem, but shall fall by the hand of King Messiah: and so great shall be the slaughter, that for seven whole years the children of Israel shall be entirely occupied in burning their armour, neither ploughing their land nor pruning their trees during that time.

*Ibid., line 23.*—The theory of a twofold resurrection is founded upon Dan. xii. 2; but though it is said there that some will rise "to shame," yet the Jews affirm that none of their race will finally forfeit the gift of everlasting life, unless by denying, 1. the existence of God, 2. the divinity of the Mosaic law, or 3. the doctrine of a resurrection. The older interpreters, like Kimchi, Maimonides, &c., taught that

the resurrection would take place at intervals; the just arising at the first coming of Messiah, but the mass of the people only at the end of the world. Abravanel and his school make the final judgment follow almost immediately upon Messiah's advent, and make the Gentiles rise as well as the Jews.

*Page 182, line 17.*—The notion that the coming of Messiah was indefinitely delayed because of the sins of the Jews is as old as the Babylonian Talmud. For in *Tract. Sanhedrin*, R. Elia, referring to the Jewish tradition that the world was to last 6,000 years, 2,000 without law, 2,000 under the law, and 2,000 under the Messiah, explains the delay in His coming by the unworthiness of the people. In the same way his state is made to depend upon their merits; for the same *Tract.* says, "In Isaiah lx. 22 we read, *The coming of Messiah is in its time*, and yet God says, *I will hasten it*. This discrepancy is, to be thus understood. If the Jews deserve it, I will hasten it; if not, it will be in its time. So Dan. vii. 13 represents Messiah as coming in glory, but Zech. ix. 9 in humility; but this means that if the Jews deserve it the Messiah shall come in the clouds of heaven, but otherwise upon an ass." The Talmud then proceeds thus: "King Sapor said to Samuel, You say that Messiah will come riding on an ass, I will send Him a bay horse." Shortly afterwards it says, "I asked Elias when Messiah would come? He answered, Go and ask Him. But where, said I, shall I find Him? He will sit, said he, at the gate of Rome, among the poor and wretches covered with sores, whose wounds He will bind up one by one." I may add that we lose the full force of Zech. ix. 9 by translating עני 'meek:' it means 'poor.'

## SERMON IX.

*Page 261, line 14.*—One of the earliest writers against the Manichees was Titus, Bishop of Bostra, a contemporary of Ephrem Syrus. His work consists of four books, in the first

of which he considers the philosophical dogmas of Manes, in the second the proofs alleged by him for the existence of an evil principle in creation, in the third he refutes his attacks upon the Old Testament, and in the fourth his calumnies of the New. In the original Greek only the first two books are extant, and a very small portion of the third, the rest, as given in *Gallandii Bib. Vet. Patr.*, lib. v. pp. 328—345, being spurious. A Syriac translation, however, of the whole work has been discovered in that famous Nitrian manuscript, justly considered the gem of the whole collection, No. 12,150, containing the “Recognitions” of St. Clement, the “Theophania” and “The Martyrs of Palestine” of Eusebius, and this treatise of Titus, all now published by the labours of Dr. Lee, Dr. Cureton, and Dr. Lagarde. Its date is A.D. 411, being only forty years subsequent to the probable time of Titus’s death in A.D. 371. In this work the third book seems to me by far the most interesting, and in it the author shews that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil contained no noxious quality in itself, but was simply a very easy probation, suited to the undeveloped state of Adam’s reason. Man is now, he argues, capable of a higher probation, and therefore his fall was not an unmixed evil, but rather a good, foreseen in God’s counsels. Upon creation no change passed in consequence of Adam’s fall, nor is such the meaning of Gen. iii. 17, but from the first the earth was fitted to be the place of man’s probation (§ 18), who was indeed created *sinless*, but at the same time *capable of sinning*. Much therefore was provided which would have been useless to Adam had he never sinned, and the command in Gen. i. 28 implies labour, fowling, fishing, hunting, and agriculture, (§ 21). Men err in applying to the whole of creation what is true only of paradise, a special place fitted for Adam and Eve in their state of simplicity, when as yet they could not distinguish good and evil. “Adam’s disobedience, therefore, made no change in creation, nor was any new dispensation introduced, but God foreknew man’s disobedience, and had from the first prepared for him whatever would be serviceable for his use.” He had even fitted him for death (§ 22), and “death, though

it carries with it the idea of punishment, was really a great and wonderful kindness from God to man," (§ 18).

In the second book (§ 23, ed. Lagarde) he equally denies that death is an evil, "for what necessarily happens to all is no evil . . . besides, if there were no death, the just man would be eternally labouring to attain unto virtue, without being the better for his pains, and the unjust man would pass an immortality in wicked pleasures; both of which things would be monstrous. But the intervention of death both puts a stop to the unrighteous pleasure of the sinner, and perfects the righteous labour of the good. For since the power of sinning is a necessary part of man, as being involved in the power of right-doing, but this power, given to man in order that he might attain to what is honourable and good, has a tendency in most men to degenerate into the easier path of sin, whereby virtue becomes the more admirable as being coupled with difficulty, death is useful to both, to the just and to the unjust, as being to the one a respite from his labours, and to the other a termination to his misdeeds."

In the same book, § 39, he argues that "though wild beasts are objects of fear, they are not evil. For evil can exist only where an operation of the reason takes place, but a mere physical instinct is incapable of either virtue or vice. . . . A wild beast therefore is no defect, for it does not possess reason, but a wicked man is an evil, because he deliberately pursues objects of the nature of which he is cognisant." Titus then proceeds at some length to discuss the moral object of the existence of wild beasts in creation (cf. also § 38), considering that they were intended to awaken in man *fear*, his general fault being a want of earnestness, which makes him content with earth, and forgetful of his higher duties. He also shews how admirably adapted these animals are to their place and use.

These instances may suffice to shew with how much more vigour the Fathers discussed these questions than is usual now. To say nothing of imaginative accounts of the supposed effects of the Fall upon creation, there are pseudo-scientific men who would have us believe that the discovery

of the great antiquity of death disproves the Mosaic cosmogony. Titus shews that the world before and after the fall was much the same. It was different to Adam, because he was placed under new relations, but was in itself unchanged. Even he was created capable of dying, and eating the forbidden fruit made no immediate change in his physical state. "He did not immediately fall down and burst asunder." Lib. iii. § 24. In short, he frankly admits that this world is the place of man's probation; as such it must have its trials and difficulties, and each man's probation must have its termination, and therefore the existence of death. Probation is even the more honourable in proportion as it is more difficult, and therefore was more honourable after the fall than before, and consequently the fall was not an evil to the human race, nor inconsistent with God's goodness. Paradise was an exceptional state of things, and the probation in it was very simple and easy, but such as it was foreseen Adam would be unequal to. Why man is subject to this probation we cannot tell, for we are not God's counsellors; but grant it as a fact, and it solves for us all the supposed difficulties about the existence of sin, and evil, and pain, and death. Even of their abstract nature we know little or nothing, but they are, he argues, blessings and kindnesses to us as moral and responsible beings.



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