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ART. I.—*The Matter of Prophecy.*

THE likeness of the prophets to Moses, and their position in the old economy, determine the task with which they were charged. This was to maintain in its integrity the covenant relation of the people to God, and so to conduct and superintend that relation that it might work out the grand end of its institution, a preparation for the coming of Christ. Hence every thing is viewed by them in its bearings upon that fundamental covenant. It is theirs to develope to the understanding of the people their obligations and privileges arising out of their special relation to God, the fatal consequences which would ensue from its abandonment or neglect, and the glorious issue which God designed to effect for them and for the world by means of it. As they were the authorized expounders of the purposes of God touching a plan still in progress, their communications largely concerned events which were yet future. It was given to them to anticipate the further unfoldings of the divine plan of grace, and to announce what the Most High had in store for Israel and for the world.

The predictions of the prophets are of course qualified and shaped by their grand aim as just exhibited. They are consequently not anticipations of future events selected at random,

nor revelations of what was to take place hereafter considered as such; any more than the sacred history is a chance record of the past, in which any thing that has ever occurred might with equal readiness have found a place. All clusters about the covenant of mercy, the gracious scheme of salvation which God was conducting amongst men. The true prophecy differs from the disclosures of the future pretended to by heathen seers, as much as the true miracle does from useless and isolated prodigies. As the miracle is more than a mere wonder of superhuman power, prophecy is likewise more than a wonder of superhuman foresight. The end is in neither case the exhibition of the supernatural. This is but a means, and must be determined in its character and the extent of its employment by the end to which it was subordinated. Inasmuch, therefore, as prophecy was not a field for the display of supernatural prescience, but an agency for the furtherance of a divine plan, it must itself be methodical and form a related system. Its seat was the chosen people, its end the salvation of Christ, Rev. xix. 10, and to this end it worked its way by gradual approaches.

The prophetic disclosures of the future may be classed under three heads, viz. 1. The coming fortunes of the covenant people, or its individual members; 2. Those of gentile nations; and 3. Messianic prophecies. The Mosaic covenant is the polestar from which each of these takes its direction; and each is made to do its part in the instruction and training of the people.

In regard to the first theme, it is shown how the violated covenant shall in every instance be avenged upon transgressors, while the divine blessing shall attend the faithful and obedient. The prophets point out in numberless cases, as divine prescience alone could enable them to do, the particular form of chastisement which would be inflicted for given acts of transgression, or indicate the exact blessing to be expected if a hearty obedience be yielded. The evident aim of these revelations is to render the people steadfast in their adherence to the fundamental covenant, and to deter them from its violation.

In the predictions respecting gentile nations these are contemplated as aliens to the covenant, and as enemies of it. For,

as a general rule, with few if any exceptions, no prophecy is directed against any foreign power except on the ground of avowed and active hostility to the people of God. As nothing is more fixed in the divine counsels than the triumph of this scheme of grace, all who set themselves in opposition to it must be overthrown. The prosperity of the heathen must, therefore, be temporary, and be succeeded by their utter fall and ruin, except as they shall ultimately yield to this gracious covenant and share its blessings. This is repeatedly exemplified by detailed exhibitions of the fate awaiting various nations. These revelations were not made for the benefit of those nations themselves. It does not appear that they were commonly even sent to them, or their existence made known to them. It was for the instruction of the covenant people that these prophecies were uttered. And hence the prophet Isaiah (i. 1,) entitles his book a vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem, although it contains several chapters of predictions respecting a number of other nations. These prophecies relating to the heathen were particularly designed, 1. To teach the people of God that Jehovah was not like the imaginary gods of the pagans, a local or national deity, but the governor of the whole world, who by his omniscience foresaw, and by his almighty providence controlled, all the affairs of all mankind. 2. That the principles of his administration were everywhere the same, and everywhere those of perfect rectitude. Sin should be punished wherever it was found. 3. To counteract the temptation to despondency and unbelief, arising from the splendour and power of heathen kingdoms as contrasted with the humble and often suffering condition of the worshippers of the true God. It was not the superior power of their idol deities which raised them to their affluence and prosperity while Israel was weak. But Jehovah raised them up, and was accomplishing his own purposes by them. As soon as these were fulfilled they would be overturned, and the kingdom given to the righteous Ruler, who was to proceed from the midst of Israel. 4. The covenant would accomplish its end, even with respect to them. The original design of its establishment was (Gen. xii. 3) that all families of the earth might be blessed. Broken as the heathen were to be by judgment, a remnant

would finally seek the Lord, and share with Israel the blessings of his grace.

Messianic prophecies are those which relate to the person and work of the great Redeemer, who is called Messiah, the Anointed, Dan. ix. 25, 26; Psalm ii. 2. Compare Isa. lxi. 1. He is the end of the Mosaic covenant, to prepare for whose coming it was instituted, and in the glory of whose reign it shall find its consummation. Then all the ideas which it exhibited in outline, or in imperfect forms, shall have a complete and adequate realization; then all the wants and deficiencies which were developed during the operation of the old economy shall be abundantly made up and supplied. The doctrine of a Messiah is peculiar to the religion of Israel, of which it thus forms a most essential part. Heathen antiquity preserved among its traditions the memory of a golden age; but it neither knew nor dreamed of its return in the future, except as the hint was gathered directly or indirectly from the Hebrew Scriptures. It is also not a doctrine of the false prophets, but only of those who were truly inspired by him who established the old economy. The former, in prophesying smooth things, confine their promises of good entirely to the proximate future.

This class of prophecies was calculated and designed to answer a number of important ends,* in the experience both of those who lived before, and those who lived after the advent. As respects the former, they contributed,

1. To their encouragement and steadfastness in times of outward depression and trial. The people were thus assured that God's plan of grace was not contingent, but fixed and sure, and that it had not been abandoned nor suspended, as their sufferings and their sins might tempt them despondently to imagine. However oppressed and downtrodden Israel may at any time be, they shall not be suffered to perish, nor shall the aim of their selection as the people of God be frustrated, but every word of promise made to them and to their fathers shall certainly be fulfilled. This same end was accomplished, to a certain extent, by predictions of inferior blessings and of deli-

* See Reinke Beiträge, II., p. 9, etc. Hengstenberg's Christologie, III. 2, p. 1, etc.

verances nearer at hand. But even these are often blended with or merged into Messianic hopes. These latter were indeed misunderstood or misinterpreted by the carnal portion of the people, who thought only of an external worldly splendour, and lost sight of the true spiritual glory of the Messiah. But in spite of this, they were not without their use for those who thus perverted or failed to apprehend them; for they still tended to preserve, in at least an outward adherence to their covenant obligations, such as could only be attracted by the sensible and the outward.

2. They removed the temptation to unbelief, arising from the glaring contrast in Israel themselves, between what they were by the promise and appointment of God, and what they were in actual fact. They were the people of God, with whom he had entered into solemn covenant at Sinai, and yet how far actual appearances seemed to disprove the existence of any such relation! Could they be under Almighty protection, who were lorded over by the servants of impotent idols? Could they be his peculiar people, his holy nation, among whom iniquity so abounded? The seeming contradiction is resolved by pointing to the Messianic future. The present state of things was but temporary. The covenant had but imperfectly done its work as yet. It would one day achieve all that it was designed or could be expected to accomplish. And the people of God would then be, both in outward state and in inward character, all that the people of the infinitely glorious Jehovah should be.

3. They were powerful aids and incentives to holiness, by keeping before the minds of the people their true ideal. Under the sway of the Messiah, the requirements of the covenant would be fully recognised and obeyed. To exhibit Israel as they were then to be, was to set forth a model for present imitation, and to reveal the pressure of obligations which already existed; and this might be expected to be the more effective, inasmuch as all participation in the blessings of that period was suspended upon the possession of the requisite character, while others were to be visited by a heavy condemnation.

4. They tended to repress that pride, which the possession

of superior privileges is so apt to engender, by showing the temporary nature of their superiority and the end of its bestowment. They were thus blessed, not because they were better than others, nor in order that they might be exalted above others, but that others might be blessed in them. That with which they were put in trust was for the benefit of the world, and the existing restriction was for the sake of an ultimate and universal diffusion. The necessity of such a check is shown by the fact, that even in spite of it the majority fell into the error which it was designed to counteract, indulging a vain conceit of the inherent superiority of the Jews to other nations, and regarding the favour of God as theirs by a perpetual and exclusive right.

5. They held up ever afresh, and under those aspects which were at each time most needed and most impressive, the great object of saving faith and hope, the true Mediator between God and man, the only availing offering for sin. How far Messiah was understood and accepted in this character, particularly in the early stages of the Old Testament revelation, cannot now perhaps be certainly determined. It is, however, clearly taught that he was the true ground of the forgiveness of sins under the old economy, however imperfectly this may have been apprehended by the penitent believer. Rom. iii. 25.

6. Another most important end of these prophecies was to afford sure marks for the recognition of Messiah, when he should appear. They did thus lead to Jesus great numbers of those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. They were constantly appealed to for this purpose by our Lord and his apostles, who rested his claims upon their authority, and bid the people search the Scriptures, for they were they that testified of him.

7. Now that Messiah has long since come, the exact fulfilment of these, as well as other prophecies, is an irrefragable argument of their divine origin, of the divinity of the Old Testament religion, and of the divinity of Christianity; while they afford, likewise, an insight into the method pursued by God in making known to men his scheme of grace, and preparing for its complete introduction. And they show how every thing centered in Christ from the very beginning, leading us thus to

prize and exalt him more, as well as thankfully to adore the ways of God.

There is a sense, having inspired authority for its correctness, (Acts iii. 24,) in which every prophecy uttered under the Old Testament may be said to have been Messianic. The entire Old Testament is the record of the divine scheme of preparation for Christ's coming, and nothing was admitted into it which did not belong to this scheme, and which consequently was not in some way, direct or indirect, evident or obscure, immediate or remote, related to the common end of the whole. Every prophecy of the overthrow of a hostile heathen power, indicated the removal of an obstruction and an antagonist to Messiah's universal sway. Every prophecy of good to Israel was a foretaste and type of the blessings which Messiah was to bring; and these are frequently so blended in the description with the antitype that it is impossible to separate them, and to distinguish with precision those expressions which are to be referred to inferior mercies, close at hand, from those which relate to the ultimate good things of Messiah's days. In the more restricted and usual sense, however, those prophecies only are called Messianic, in which distinct and explicit mention is made either of Messiah's person, or of the results which he was to accomplish by his coming. There are several criteria by which such prophecies may be distinguished.

1. Their correspondence with the event. Prophecies evidently and exclusively fulfilled in the Messiah, must have been spoken of him. If a person is described as possessing attributes which belong only to Christ, or performing works such as he only has performed; or if any thing is described which is characteristic of the dispensation he was to introduce, this is beyond a doubt Messianic, whatever the immediate connection in which it may stand. Thus when Isaiah (ix. 6) describes a child as born, who was yet the mighty God, or (chap. liii.) speaks of a servant of God who offered himself a vicarious sacrifice for the sins of men; and Zechariah (ix. 9, 10) speaks of the king of Jerusalem entering it upon an ass, who shall exercise a universal dominion; or (xiii. 7) of the man, Jehovah's fellow, smitten with the sword; and Micah (iv. 1—4,) of the submission of all nations to the law proceeding from Zion, and the

consequent cessation of war and strife—these have been or are to be fulfilled in Christ, and are inapplicable to any other subject.

2. The analogy of other prophecies. A prophecy, which might be in itself of doubtful signification, will be determined to be Messianic, if it be so connected with another known to be such, that both evidently relate to the same subject, or if it ascribe to its subject attributes or works which the analogy of prophecy determines to be peculiar to the Messiah, or to the period following his advent, or if it contain expressions and forms of speech which are characteristically Messianic. Thus, even if it were possible, as rationalists allege, to explain the child Immanuel given as a pledge of deliverance from the Syrians (Isa. vii. 14) of another than Christ, every other reference would be precluded by the subsequent allusions to this same child, (Isa. ix. 6, 11;) where Christ must beyond question be intended. That it is Messiah who is spoken of (Zech. iii. 8) as the Branch, is proved by vi. 12, where the same name is applied to him “who shall be a priest upon his throne;” and this creates a strong presumption that the Branch of the Lord (Isa. iv. 2) is to be understood in the same way. The prediction (Isa. xix. 18—25) of an altar to the Lord in the land of Egypt, of the cordial alliance between Egypt and Assyria, and their union with Israel in covenant privileges, must relate to the Messianic period, because the conversion of the Gentiles and universal peace are in all the prophets represented to be characteristic of that period. The invasion of Gog and Magog, (Ezek. xxxviii. 16,) and the final return of Israel to God, (Hosea iii. 5,) are to take place in “the latter days;” this expression, being a standing designation of the times of the Messiah, fixes this as the period of fulfilment.

3. The testimony of the New Testament. If our Lord or the apostles or evangelists unequivocally declare any prophecy to apply to Christ, this infallibly determines its meaning. Thus, when Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth cited Isaiah lxi. 1, 2, as fulfilled in himself, (Luke iv. 18, 19,) or declared to the Pharisees (Matt. xxii. 43) that David spoke of him in the 110th Psalm; and Philip, acting under the direction of the Spirit of God, preached Jesus to the eunuch from the fifty-

third chapter of Isaiah, (Acts viii. 35;) and Matthew adduces the prediction (Zech. xi. 12, 13) of the thirty pieces of silver paid as the price of the Good Shepherd, and asserts that it was fulfilled in the reward of Judas's betrayal. Matt. xxvii. 9.

It is important, however, in the application of this criterion, that a meaning be not attributed to these inspired authorities which their words do not properly contain. It is only when they design to give a real exposition of the prophecy, that we are authorized to infer its meaning from the use which they make of it. They sometimes employ the familiar words of the Old Testament in application to a subject of which they are treating, without designing to intimate that this was in the thoughts of the writer, or is the proper sense of the passage in its original connection. Thus, when Paul (Rom. x. 18) adopts the language of Psalm xix. 4, "their sound went into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world," in describing the universality of the gospel offer, he is not to be understood as deciding that this is the subject of the Psalm. He merely declares that what David there says of the revelation of God by the material heavens, is true of the proclamation of the gospel; both are addressed to all men without restriction. So when our Lord says (Matt. xiii. 14) that the prophecy of Esaias, "Hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand," (Isa. vi. 9,) was fulfilled in his own generation, his meaning is that the words of the prophet have a fresh application to them, are as appropriate to them as to those of whom they were originally spoken.

Again, the declaration of the sacred writers that a prophecy finds actual fulfilment in a given person or event, does not necessarily show that it is when interpreted in its original connection, to be restricted to that single application. That must of course be included within its proper scope, but the prophecy itself may have a much more extensive signification. Thus, when Matthew says, (viii. 17,) that Christ's miracles of healing were wrought in fulfilment of Isaiah liii. 4, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses," he does not thereby limit the meaning of the prophet to this particular sense, or deny that his words were intended to describe the entire redeeming work of Christ and his vicarious atonement. His miraculous

cures of bodily disorders were performed in his capacity as Redeemer, and were signs and pledges of whatever it was his design to accomplish besides. As such, they properly fall, agreeably to the statement of the evangelist, within the broader compass of the prophet's meaning. So, when it is said, (John xix. 36,) that "a bone of him shall not be broken" (Exod. xii. 46) was fulfilled in the history of the crucifixion, this does not hinder but that those words in their original connection relate to the paschal lamb; that lamb, however, being typical of Christ, the apostle remarks upon the coincidence between the type and the antitype; what was enjoined in regard to the one was fulfilled in the case of the other. So again Matthew ii. 15, quotes Hosea xi. 1, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," as fulfilled in the fortunes of the infant Saviour. As spoken by Hosea they have immediate relation to the exodus of Israel from Egypt. But Israel, as the son of God, was a type of Christ, his only begotten Son; and the evangelist directs the attention of his readers to the fact that the history of the type is repeated in the antitype. Israel was in the infancy of the people rescued from a tyranny which threatened his destruction, and was brought safely out of Egypt. God's own Son had a similar destiny. He was in his infancy exposed to a tyrant's persecution, and by divine interposition rescued from it. The same principle of the divine procedure marked both cases in allowing the malignity of man to display itself against the object of heavenly love. And the land of Egypt was to both a scene of the same paternal interference.

4. The history of prophetic interpretation. If a passage has prevailingly been referred to Christ from the earliest periods, among both Jews and Christians, this affords a strong presumptive proof that such reference is correct. The presumption thus gained rests not barely upon the concurrent judgment of many able minds, in different ages, but upon the promised guidance of the Spirit, which gives a real insight into the meaning of Scripture, though it does not secure against error in the exposition of individual passages; and in the case of very ancient explanations, it is neither impossible nor improbable that they may sometimes rest upon a tradition springing from an inspired source. The strength of the argument derived from Jewish

usage, is increased when the interpretation so supported is at variance with the prevailing prejudices and carnal expectations of the people, as when passages descriptive of Messiah's humiliation and sufferings are admitted to refer to him. In this class of predictions particularly, the more modern Jewish authorities are apt to deviate from those of earlier date, by attributing them to another subject than the Messiah. This is done in order to evade the force of the arguments drawn hence by Christians for the Messiahship of Jesus.

The Messianic quality, whether this be directly or indirectly exhibited, is the most important characteristic of the instructions of the prophets, and that by which their interest and value is chiefly determined. Their predictions of Christ are not detached and isolated utterances, standing by themselves, and having little to do with the rest of their communications. These form really the centre and the heart of every prophetic ministry. Other revelations are subordinated to these, grow out of them, or are arranged around them. Belonging as the prophets do to a great scheme of preparation for the coming of Christ, that which determines the relative position and rank of each, is the function which they severally perform in regard to this common task of the whole; and it is this which gives its consistency to each individual ministry. The work allotted to any particular prophet in the plan of God must be estimated from this point. The ministry of each prophet may thus be received as a unit, designed to accomplish a particular result, to take a given part in the training of the people toward their predestined end, and entering as an individual member into the greater whole of the entire body of prophetic communication, all of which, though distributed among different organs, acting without mutual concert or combination, forms yet in the design of God one connected and related system, appointed to discharge its own proper office in the general scheme of the Old Testament economy.

We thus arrive at the idea not merely of the harmony of prophecy, the consistency of the revelations made by all the various prophets, but its unity, and that not as an aggregate of independent masses, but an organic whole made up of concurrent and related members, a carefully contrived and well-

ordered system. The one plan of God directs and animates the whole. Individual prophets are the agents of his Spirit working in unison as they are sent by him, executing each his different task, but all belonging to the same general scheme, Christ being the end of the whole and the key to each individual part.

Looking at the subject from this comprehensive point of view we may trace certain general features of the plan of prophetic communication.

(1.) The first is its gradual and progressive character. The early revelations respecting Christ were of the nature of outlines; these were in later times gradually filled up, their obscurities removed, and whatever was lacking supplied. The promise to our first parents contained no more than the general idea of redemption, a victory over the tempter as the end of a painful struggle, the serpent's head crushed at the cost of a bruised heel. But there was a gradual progress from this point until the person and character of the Redeemer, and the nature and success of his work were distinctly brought to view. Trait after trait was added, and line after line, until all that was made known, which it was thought proper to disclose before the personal appearance of the Word made flesh.

This gradual unfolding, it is here to be observed, was neither demanded nor conditioned by any original and absolute necessity. While it is true that the possible extent of divine revelation is limited by the receptive capacity of those to whom it is made, there is nothing in the latest Scripture which might not have been made intelligible to the earliest generation of men, had God chosen to communicate it to them. The progressive character of prophecy arose simply out of the plan which, though marked as all God's plans are, by consummate wisdom, was freely adopted by the Infinite Spirit, as that by which he should conduct his revelation of mercy. As this was a plan of training for Israel and the world, it naturally carried with it, that the simpler lessons should be first communicated, and that when these had been sufficiently illustrated and enforced, they should be followed by others which were more advanced.

In the actual conduct of this scheme it does not advance with mechanical regularity, and a uniform rate of progress, each

prophet taking up the thread of instruction at the point where it was dropped by his predecessor, and carrying it an even number of paces, to surrender it to him that comes after. With all the general consistency of the scheme, the freedom of the divine Spirit who bloweth where he listeth, asserts itself here, by making whom he will, and to whatever extent he pleases, the bearer of his messages. The respective fulness of the Messianic revelations is by no means graduated carefully by their chronological order. Each has a fitness to his place; but this does not in all cases arise from his going in all things beyond his predecessors. We do not learn more of Christ from Haggai than from Isaiah, from Nahum than from Joel. One prophet may even be commissioned to reveal some particular aspect of the truth, with a distinctness greatly beyond that attained by any who have succeeded him. Thus Isaiah speaks of the atoning death of Christ, and Jeremiah of the new covenant to supersede the vanishing one of Sinai, with a clearness equalled by no subsequent prophet. The advance, which is on the whole manifest and undeniable, is not that of a dead mechanical progress, but is conducted with that free variety which belongs to the actings of an intelligent mind.

(2.) The revelations of prophecy are often related to contemporaneous or antecedent types, and derive from them, to a greater or less extent, their matter or their form. The progress of prophetic communication, which is thus on the one hand determined by the general plan of God, and modified by the free actings of that Spirit who giveth no account of any of his matters, is on the other hand conditioned in some measure by the history of the chosen people, who were the theatre of these revelations. God was conducting, by his revealing Spirit and by his gracious providence, two coördinate lines of preparation for the advent of his Son. While by his predictive word he pointed forward to his coming, and described with growing clearness the design and results of his mission, he seconded these instructions by his providence, raising up and placing before the minds of the people types and images, to represent to them the coming Saviour, and to prepare them to appreciate and welcome him at his appearing. These two schemes of instruction by prophecy and by historical types, while in a

manner distinct and separately conducted, yet from being carried on contemporaneously, acquire a general correspondence, and their lessons are often interwoven. Accordingly, prophecy not infrequently borrows its lessons from them. Thus, after Moses had been raised up and set before the people as the exemplar of the prophetic order, Christ was for the first time predicted as a prophet like unto him. Deut. xviii. 18. It was not until Saul's persecution of David had afforded the example of God's anointed suffering as such, and without fault of his own, and David's subsequent ascent of the throne gave a specimen of the true theocratic king, that the sufferings and the kingdom of Christ were made the subject of prophecy in the Messianic psalms. The sway of Solomon presented a new type, and the spirit of prophecy unfolded it in Psalm lxxii. Israel, God's servant, appointed to spread the knowledge of his name, suffering in Babylon, and restored by Cyrus, stood in a typical relation, which Isaiah develops, (chaps. xl.—lxvi.) The idea of a universal empire was first represented in that of Babylon, and then Daniel was inspired to foretell that empire, absolutely without limit or end, which was to rise upon the ruins of this great monarchy and its successors, (chaps. ii. vii.) The approaching re-peopling of the land, and the restoration of the temple and its ritual, were types which suggested and gave their meaning to Ezekiel's prophecies, (chaps. xl.—xlviii.) The actual rebuilding of the temple, under the joint direction of Zerubbabel, descended from David's line, and Joshua the high priest, gave occasion to Zechariah to predict the union of the royal and the sacerdotal offices in Him who was to build God's true temple, (vi. 13.) While this obvious relation existing between prophecies and types should not be overlooked, neither should it be exaggerated beyond its true limits. This is done by Hofmann,* when he claims that the former are in all cases based upon the latter, the revelations of both being in each successive period precisely coextensive, and God never foretelling anything by the mouth of the prophets, unless the fundamental idea had first been woven into the history of the people, and represented to them in the form of a type. The office of pro-

* Hofmann, *Weissagung und Erfüllung.*

phesy is thus reduced simply to the infallible detection and interpretation of coexisting types. There is, however, no warrant for such a limitation of its function; and the precise equipoise of prophecies and types, which it assumes as uniform at all times, does not in fact exist. The intimations of the future existing in the types, and the more perfect disclosures granted to the prophets, were graduated by the sovereign pleasure of Him who was the author of both. And though, as coördinate lines of instruction, addressed to the same people and directed to the same end, there are manifold correspondences between them, there is no absolute coincidence.

(3.) The prophetic communications of each successive period were adapted to the special wants of the people then existing. Besides the general end which they were all intended and adapted to subserve in the preparation for Messiah's coming, they had a special purpose to answer in the direction and the salvation of each successive generation to which they were severally addressed. Each generation of the people needed counsel specifically adapted to their own emergencies, which were different, in some respects, both from those of their predecessors and their successors. They needed to be warned against those particular forms of transgression to which they were immediately tempted, and supported under those trials by which they were peculiarly pressed. Their circumstances and their spiritual wants suggested those aspects of the truth, and those forms of communicating and expressing it, which would prove to them most impressive and beneficial. At the same time, this special adaptation to times and seasons is not only managed without prejudice to the general plan of the whole, but it really forms the method by which the latter advances; not indeed with regularly measured steps, but by sure and constant approaches to its destined end. The prophetic exhibition of Christ is accomplished by successive teachings, each suited to its own age and its own special design, but all combining to produce the general effect. The prophets may thus be likened to a grand orchestra. Each musician plays a part adapted to his own particular instrument, which taken by itself is designed to give a particular effect to the piece; and yet they are attuned in such precise harmony, and so contrived

with reference to the various possibilities of the melody, that combined upon the oratorio of the Messiah, they bring out, as could in no other way be done, the full power of that magnificent production. The necessities of one period call for the presentation of the coming Saviour and his work under one point of view; those of other periods lead to the contemplation of them from different sides. And the necessities of the people, as they arise in the progress of their history, are themselves accommodated to the grand end to be accomplished, being of such a variety and character, that the instructions which they demand may complete the total of the revelations to be made respecting Messiah before his advent.

To the present corruption of the people, the prophets oppose the time when Jerusalem and its inhabitants shall be holy; to the sinfulness of the princes, and their impotence before their foes, that king who shall reign in righteousness, and be a covert from the storm; to the humiliation and oppression of Zion, her future triumph and glory; to the disastrous schism of Judah and Israel, the period of their complete reunion. When Judah were in apprehension from Syria, Isaiah reassures them by the promise of the birth of Immanuel. As a pledge of deliverance from Assyria, he points to the child that is born, and the Son that is given, whose name is Wonderful. In the foresight of Judah's captivity he shows how the great Head of his people must likewise pass through sorrow and humiliation to his glorious reward. Jeremiah predicts the loss of the ark, but speaks of the time when it would be no longer missed from the new effulgence of the divine manifestations; the approaching temporary interruption of the royal and sacerdotal offices gives him occasion to speak of him in whom they would be perpetual. When the predicted seventy years had brought about the period of the expected restoration, Daniel foretells that seventy weeks shall intervene before the advent of the great Restorer. The exiles are consoled for the meanness of the structure they had reared, as compared with Solomon's more splendid temple, by the promise from the mouth of Haggai, that this house should be filled with the divine glory in a higher sense than that which preceded it. Malachi warns

the carnally secure of his coming, who should sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.

The conception of the Messiah, thus various enlarged from time to time, is not to be confounded with the accidental growth of a merely human idea, which has its birth in the mind of men, and is the product of the circumstances which surround them. All that has the appearance of being casual and contingent arises from the divine adaptation of the instructions relating to the Messiah to the varying wants of those who were to be thus gradually trained to a proper apprehension of his character. With all the seeming divergence in the modes of his presentation by the different prophets, and the apparent inconsistency even of the characters separately ascribed to him, the fact that they all meet in Jesus Christ, and are seen, by the key furnished by his wonderful person, to be in perfect harmony with one another, shows beyond question that all this sprang from the mind of one who knew the end from the beginning.

(4.) The prophets often largely adopt both the ideas and language of antecedent revelations. There is the same free variety here as in other features of the scheme which we are considering. The relation referred to sometimes consists in a resumption and further unfolding of the same themes. Thus, as an ancient prophecy approaches the time of its fulfilment it may be reproduced with new enlargement and additional emphasis. Or an idea which is only faintly suggested by one prophet, may be expanded more and more by those who follow after, until it attains a magnitude and is invested with an importance such as could scarcely have been anticipated from its earliest form. A prophecy may be repeated in precise words from another prophet, (compare Isa. ii. 2—4, Micah iv. 1—3,) or with the adoption of much of its language it may be freely modified in form and arrangement, and receive large additions. Compare Jer. lxix. 7, etc. and Obadiah; Jer. xlviii. and Isa. xv. xvi. This may even be done with application to a new subject, as in the book of Revelation the fall of the great Antichristian power is described in terms which are largely borrowed from the Old Testament predictions of the overthrow of Babylon. It is really an old enemy revived in a new dress,

and the spirit of the ancient prophecy demands its destruction. Figures and symbols are likewise freely borrowed, *e. g.*, the symbols of Ezekiel's visions and of that of Zechariah are chiefly drawn from the Levitical institutions or the ritual. Or the coincidence with antecedent revelations may be found principally in isolated phrases and in allusions to expressions and forms of speech. All this may appear in one form in one prophet, and in another form in another, and to a quite different extent in different prophets.

Some of the older writers thought it necessary to assume in all these cases an entire independence of one writer upon another, and that the words, even where they might be precisely the same through long periods, were directly suggested by the Holy Spirit to the minds of both. Others of later date, less careful of the credit of the prophets, or of the perfection of their inspiration, have charged these coincidences to servile imitation, and a want of originality on the part of the borrower; as though, unable to mark out a new course of thought for himself, he was content with a tame repetition of what had been already said before. Neither of these opinions is well founded. The true doctrine of the inspiration of the prophets does not deny, but affirms, the continued operation of the natural powers of their own minds, only elevated, assisted, and preserved from all error, both in the matter and the form of their communications. The familiar words of earlier Scriptures would offer themselves no less readily to them because of their inspiration; in fact, there were special reasons why they should be chosen in preference. Words of the Spirit in his earlier revelations, flow naturally from the mouth of the organs of the same Spirit in later times. It is a mark of their oneness, an external sign of their inward unison. It serves to link them all together as parts of the same continuous revelation. It is a recognition of the authority of their predecessors, by which later prophets give the sanction of their own inspiration to earlier predictions, and likewise draw sanction from them for their own. At the same time, this gradual disclosure of future events, or gradual unfolding of the same truths by successive instruments, each delivering all that was given him to deliver, while yet the earliest outline implicitly involves all

that was to come after, shows that the prophets were conducting a scheme which, so far from originating, they only themselves partially comprehended. The mind which draughted the early suggestions, which are so carefully and accurately expressed, must have been at the same time conscious of the idea in its full and final form, and have designed these later evolutions of it. In other words, the infinite intelligence of God must have both sketched the entire scheme, and assigned to each prophet his particular part in carrying it forward.

An incidental advantage of some importance arising from this relation of the sacred writers to those who have preceded them, is the evidence it affords of the canonicity and genuineness of the earlier books of Scripture. There can be no better evidence that a book was in existence and was regarded as of divine authority, than the fact of its being quoted or alluded to as such. Thus, in addition to other incontestable arguments in favour of the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch, one of great force may be derived from this indirect but sure testimony to its existence in all the subsequent inspired writings. Its impress is indelibly left upon the entire history and literature of the chosen people. The facts of the Pentateuch are everywhere assumed, its institutions shown to be in operation, and its language cited or referred to in a manner and to an extent which places its existence and authority beyond reasonable contradiction. The testimony rendered in its favour by Hosea, Amos, and Micah, has been exhibited in detail by Hengstenberg and by Caspari, and may serve as illustrations of this method of argument and specimens of the fulness of evidence bearing upon this point which the prophetic writings afford. A like defence may be made, and in fact has been made, by other writers, of the disputed chapters in Isaiah, which are used by Jeremiah and other prophets with the same frequency and freedom as his unquestioned writings.

This method of argument has, however, been pushed both by the advocates and the opponents of the genuineness of the inspired writings to an extravagance and excess which is little suited to win favour from sober minds. The coincidence of two writers upon a single expression, or a few isolated expres-

sions, may leave it quite doubtful which was the original, or which borrowed from the other. And the attempt to settle all such cases with absolute precision by fixed rules, in themselves of doubtful truth or applicability, *e. g.*, that the briefer form or the more difficult expression establishes priority, lead to arbitrary and insecure results, and such as no sane man would think of relying upon for a moment in the case of modern compositions. The fact is, that with all the apparent definiteness in the principles professed, there is so much that is indefinite in the phenomena themselves, and so much that may with equal plausibility be alleged on either side, that different critics will in the same case arrive at precisely opposite conclusions, and will prove from the same data a given writer to be earlier or later than another, according as they have predetermined to do.

Another abuse to which this relation has led, is that of critical alterations of the text with a view of bringing these parallel passages into more precise conformity. This has arisen from the failure to observe that when the prophets incorporate into their own discourses or writings the language of antecedent revelations, they do so with the full consciousness of their own equal inspiration, and consequently use entire freedom in modifying it to their immediate purpose. Minute variations where there is a general resemblance are not consequently to be referred to faulty transcription and one text corrected by the other. Both are original, and both alike authoritative and inspired. All experience shows how much more likely transcribers were to err in the opposite direction than in the one here assumed. The tendency is much stronger to assimilate texts which had originally a slight diversity, than to create or increase a divergence. The fact that these trifling variations have been perpetuated with such absolute uniformity, is an argument, therefore, not of error, but of the strictest accuracy.