

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

No. 20—October, 1894.

I.

PROF. GEORGE D. HERRON AS A LEADER.

THE Rev. George D. Herron, D.D., has been brought into a new prominence recently, by the issue of the symposium in *The Northwestern Congregationalist* which resulted in the change of that paper into *The Kingdom*, and its erection into the organ of a new movement. He had been already well known and generally favorably regarded as a writer of great force, of intense earnestness, and of profound devotion to the great principle of sacrifice for others, which is the distinctive Christian doctrine, and which he knows how to enforce with startling vividness. In the department of sociology the Christian world is looking anxiously for a leader, for a man who shall come forward and speak the word at the present crisis which shall set the Church upon the way which the times call upon it to tread. Many regard Dr. Herron as this man, though he himself designates himself only as a "voice." Still, if he is a voice which shall exhibit the calmness, wisdom, balance and soundness which are required in a leader, he need but utter his cry and he will be the leader needed. Thousands of others can be found to put into execution the wisdom which he shall express.

The present writer has recently read, throughout, all the published works of Dr. Herron for the sake of determining for himself what the promise of finding here the desired leader may be.¹ The

¹ *The Larger Christ*, 1891 (quoted as *L. C.*); *The Call of the Cross*, Four College Sermons, 1892 (*C. C.*); *A Plea for the Gospel*, 1892 (*P. G.*); *The New Redemption*, 1893 (*N. R.*); *The Christian Society*, 1894 (*C. S.*). In the last volume is included Dr. Herron's first tract, *The Message of Jesus to Men of Wealth*, 1890 (*M. W.*).

II.

THE RELATION OF THE MESSIANIC TEACHING OF ISAIAH TO CON- TEMPORARY EVENTS.

HISTORICAL exegesis is at once a most important and a most difficult study. Its present importance is increased by the fact that the critical problems of the Old Testament literature arise from the relation of the literature to the history. The reconstruction of the literature is dependent on a reconstructed history, and the two must stand or fall together. Its difficulty lies in the nature of the case. Even an approximately complete induction of facts is almost impossible of attainment, and the deficiency is too often made good by pure conjecture. Fancy replaces fact and possibilities parade as certainties.

The purpose of this paper is twofold: to study the manner in which the Messianic ideal is used in the prophet's preaching to his own day, and to study the influence of the conditions of the time on the form and substance of such prophecy. It is assumed that the prophetic use of the future is analogous to historical illustration rather than to historical narrative, that prophecy is primarily preaching and secondarily prediction. The predictive element raises the prophets far above other preachers, but is itself conditioned by the conscious purpose of the prophets as quickeners of the public conscience, rebukers of national sin or comforters of the faithful. It follows that every part of prophecy is related to the circumstances of its delivery, and may best be interpreted in the light of those circumstances. This rule is of varying application: it is vital in some cases, *e. g.*, Isa. vii; and of very secondary importance in others, *e. g.*, Isa. lv. Again the true interpretation for the prophets' own day may be a very partial interpretation for our day. The spirit of prophecy is the Spirit of Christ—not the spirit of the age—and “not unto themselves, but unto us did they minister these things” (1 Pet. i. 12).

Assyriology has thrown a flood of light on the times of Isaiah, and has made a reconstruction of its chronology necessary.* By a

* For a careful study of the chronology of this period, see the article by Prof. Davis, *PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW*, Vol. i, 100ff. Also Driver, *Life and Times of Isaiah*, p. 12ff.

comparison of Biblical and Assyrian data the period of Isaiah's activity is fixed from about 740 B.C. to the end of that century. From the latter source we learn that Sennacherib's invasion took place in 701 B.C., while Uzziah was living in 742-740, and the Syro-Ephraimitic war occurred in 734. From the former we learn that Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah (Isa. i. 1), and that his great vision, which was certainly not long after he began to prophesy, was in the death year of the first-named king (Isa. vi. 1). The period covers part of the joint reign of Uzziah and Jotham (though the former was a leper withdrawn from public life), the whole of the reign of Ahaz (734-727), and also of Hezekiah (727-699). Both Uzziah and Jotham were wise and energetic rulers who had raised Judah again to the leadership of the Palestinian States, and had revived the commerce of Solomon. Jotham, the real king, seems to have associated with him his son Ahaz, who was weak and degenerate.

Isaiah began to preach in this time of luxury and careless security, and its characteristics are vividly reflected in the two discourses that belong to this period (ii-iv, v). A wealthy society, fond of foreign fashions, extravagant in dress, maintaining the magnificence of religious ritual, but rotten from head to foot, is depicted, and rebuked in burning words for avarice, drunkenness, and especially the oppression of the poor by the rich. The prophet's warnings were swift of fulfillment, and before Jotham's death the offensive league of Samaria and Damascus against Jerusalem was formed and the armies of the allies appeared. If we are correct in believing that the death of Uzziah and that of Jotham came within a few months of each other, Isaiah's great vision (chap. vi) closed this period and came to the prophet to strengthen him at a most critical time in his history, on the eve of a great national judgment—a Day of Jehovah. The great arraignment in the first chapter may well be the prophet's message at this time to the people of Judah, when foreign armies were wasting the land.*

Jotham's death left the ship of State in most troublous seas, with a vacillating, faithless king at the helm, who bartered away for temporary security the liberties of the nation. When the allied forces

* The date of Uzziah's death is of peculiar interest because it gives the date of Isaiah's great vision. The synchronism of Jotham's accession = second year of Pekah (2 Kgs. xv. 32), unless it be given up, requires a date as late as 735; for in 738 Tiglath Pileser collected tribute of Menahem, whose reign was separated from that of Pekah only by the short reign of Pekahiah. The probability is increased when it is remembered that Isaiah's ministry during Jotham's life was very different from what followed, and the accession of Ahaz was the turning point in his life. There is a marked progress in the nearness of judgment in the four sections, ii-iv, v, vi, i.

of Ephraim and Damascus threatened Judah, Ahaz in his terror turned to Assyria for aid, and found a ready response in the ambitious designs of Tiglath Pileser, anxious to increase his empire westward. For three years (734-732) the Assyrian armies were in Syria and Palestine. They attacked the Northern kingdom and Philistia; *deported captives from Naphtali, Reuben, Gad and Manasseh; captured Damascus; and counted Ahaz of Jerusalem among the vassal princes. Rezin and Pekah were dethroned and Hoshea reigned in Samaria. To Ahaz's disbelief we owe the magnificent burst of faith, which confronted the miserable king who deserted God's cause with that glorious Immanuel who should one day rule for Jehovah. Chap. vii relates the interview of king and prophet; viii. 5-x. 4 are the prophet's warning to the people, delivering to them the burden of hardening laid upon him in the vision; and chap. xvii is an oracle looking from doomed Damascus far into the future.

The last period of Isaiah's ministry includes the reigns of three Assyrian kings contemporaneous with Hezekiah in Judah. Shalmaneser IV and Hezekiah began their reigns in the same year, 727, and soon after (c. 725) a vigorous ruler, Sargon or So, made Egypt an important factor in the political problem. Far to the eastward Babylon, with the irrepressible Merodach Baladan as her leader, was an unwilling vassal ready to revolt at every opportunity. The prophet's work changed and broadened. First he was a moral reformer, unflinchingly rebuking national sins; then he opposed with all his might a foreign alliance prompted by disbelief in Jehovah; and now for a whole generation he maintained a policy of quiet faith and trustful waiting, against the feverish schemes of the politicians. It required a watchful eye and keen vision; for every State from the Nile to the Persian Gulf was involved in the struggle. His own words were speedily fulfilled, "The uproar of many peoples, which roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters!" (chap. xvii. 12). The same policy that had dictated the purchase of Assyrian aid, now looked to Egypt to save the State from the Assyrian yoke and endeavored to make a league of all the Palestinian States with Egypt as their supporter. Such a league, from which Judah stood aloof, was formed in about 725, and resulted in the capture of Samaria (722), the Egyptian defeat in the battle of Raphia, and the fall of Hamath (720).

The only discourse of Isaiah's that can certainly be connected with these events is chap. xxviii, addressed to the drunkards of Ephraim and the scornful rulers of Jerusalem. It is significant that this discourse sounds the keynote of Isaiah's Messianic teaching in this period, with the practical deduction from it (xxviii. 16). The

keynote is the certainty of Jehovah's promise, and the true response to it is patient security of heart. The danger and temptation were only intensified, as Samaria was entirely subjugated and foreigners were colonized in her land. This colonization was not improbably accompanied with operations against Judah,* and certainly in 711 Sargon defeated a coalition in the taking of Ashdod. To prevent Judah's joining this league, the prophet went about Jerusalem in scant clothing and barefooted for three years (chap. xx), but with doubtful success. It is probable that in one of these years Sargon, or at least his army, attacked Jerusalem, and with this attack Isaiah's fullest description of the Messianic kingship is best connected (x. 5-xii).

Sargon's death in 705 was the signal for a general revolt east and west, in Babylon and on the Mediterranean coast. First reducing Babylon, Sennacherib took in hand the western rebels, and, after an indecisive victory at Altakû, in Philistia, he attempted to take Jerusalem. That siege is graphically described in Scripture history and vividly reflected in the prophetic oracles. Sennacherib's boast that he "shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage" † is no empty one; but equally true is Isaiah's scornful metaphor, "turned back like a wild beast in the way he came and led by a ring in his nose" (xxxviii. 29). The discourses in chaps. xxix-xxxiii all belong to this time, and show us the prophet struggling against the strong tide that carried with it even the king. The certain and gracious destiny of Zion is contrasted first with the doom of Egypt and then of Assyria. The siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib is the last great event with which Isaiah's history is associated, though one other incident must be mentioned. That is the embassy of Merodach Baladan, which, though previous to Sennacherib's siege, closes the first part of the Book of Isaiah. It introduces the last great enemy of the kingdom, and Judah's final captor, Babylon.‡

* See the reasons given by Dr. Davis (PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW, i, p. 100), for this view.

† Schrader, *Cuneiform Insc.*, p. 293.

‡ The arrangement of the discourses of Hezekiah's reign is a matter of considerable perplexity. Leaving out the eschatological discourses (xxiv-xxvii, xxxiv) and the triumphal ode (xxxv), which have no definite connection with a particular date, there remain the discourse in x. 5-xii, the Book of Burdens (xiii-xxiii) and the discourses against the false political advisers (xxviii-xxxiii). The first of these is assigned either to the time of Sennacherib's invasion (Delitzsch and Driver), or to an earlier invasion (actual or threatened), variously dated in the "fourteenth year" of Hezekiah (Davis), in 721-720 (G. A. Smith), or in 711 (Cheyne). Dillmann suggests a skillful summary of Isaiah's discourses between 722 and 716 or 711. Its place in the book, for nothing before it need be assigned to a later date than 734, the list of conquests, though this goes back into the reign of Tiglath Pileser, and the route indicated in x. 28-32, all favor Sargon's time. The oracles against foreign nations are not important to our purpose. The only one rich in Messianic teaching is xix, usually dated about 720. As to

The comparison of the Messianic teaching with the history shows a close connection between them, resulting in adaptation in the form of the former and progress in its content. In the early chapters, of Jotham's time, the prophet aimed at reformation, and hence presented the ideal holiness of the city and the people. Next, in Ahaz's time, the Messianic king was foremost in the prophet's mind. Finally, in Hezekiah's reign, the Messianic salvation is presented in a double aspect, as *sure* and hence the sheet anchor for the ship of State, as *abundant* and hence a source of comfort to the individual believer. The Messianic teaching may thus be considered in relation to the three great functions of the prophet, as a preacher of righteousness, as a counselor of State and as a comforter of the faithful. It is impossible to draw a hard and fast line, for the different functions combine; but nevertheless one or another is always uppermost and so affects the prophecy.

First, then, what use did Isaiah as a preacher of righteousness make of the Messianic ideal? The book begins with a solemn charge of sin against the people: "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and go backward" (i. 4). This general charge is enforced by specifications of guilt against the ruling classes, with exhortation to repent and solemn warning of certain judgment. The addresses that aim at the moral reformation of the people are those of Jotham's reign; and in them the city, that is, the organized civil community or the State, and the people as existing, are contrasted with the city and the people in the Messianic age. Now the house of Jacob is filled with customs and superstitions learned of the heathen (ii. 6ff.); but at the end of the age "from Zion shall go forth the Law and the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem teaching peace to all the nations (ii. 3f.) The actual Jerusalem is full of the luxuries and vices of a heathen civilization (ii. 6-8, iii. 16-23), rich and avaricious (iii. 14f., v. 8-10, 23), trusting in material resources (iii. 1-3), confusing moral distinctions in the interest of sordid schemes (v. 18-21), and governed by incompetent and unjust officials (i. 21ff., iii. 12ff.). The ideal Jerusalem is described as holy (iv. 3), purged by a spirit of judgment (iv. 4), the city of righteousness governed by judges like those in the golden age of David and Solomon (i. 26) and protected from every defilement by a canopy of cloud and fire (iv. 5). Now, the

the last chapters (xxvii-xxxiii), if chap. xxviii dates them all, we must refer them with Dillmann to the early years of Hezekiah. It may be better with Driver and G. A. Smith to separate chap. xxviii, and to refer the rest to the years preceding Sennacherib's invasion. Cf. xxix. 1 and xxxii. 10.

daughters of Zion are clad in extravagant finery, loaded with jewels and ornaments, all of which must soon be cast aside, as Jehovah's judgments come upon Israel; but in that day the Lord will wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion (iii. 16-24, iv. 4). In place of the artificial and fading beauty now so fashionable, then will Jehovah give the perfect but natural beauty of rich spiritual blessings.* A very striking and beautiful instance of this law of contrast is found in the Woe against Ephraim. The proud crowns, the garlands of flowers, worn by the debauchers of Samaria in their drunken revels, shall be trodden under foot, giving only a momentary pleasure like the first ripe fig; but Jehovah of Hosts shall be the glorious crown and beauteous diadem worn by the righteous remnant (xxviii. 1-6). When on the highway of the fuller's field, prophet stood face to face with king, the sight of the faithless, fearful heir of David's throne brought before Isaiah's mind Him who should fulfill the covenant made with David. Ahaz and Immanuel stand in sharp contrast. The former of royal birth and luxurious raising, the latter the son of a nameless maiden and nurtured on the plain food of a poor people—curds and honey (vii. 15). Ahaz, weak and vacillating, shall bring down upon his nation in judgment darker days than any since the great disruption (vii. 17). Immanuel is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, and shall establish the kingdom with judgment and righteousness from henceforth and forever (ix. 6). The strongest rebuke of the actual was the portrayal of the ideal king.

There is a real fitness in the title chosen by Mr. Matthew Arnold for his little book, *Isaiah of Jerusalem*. As Ewald remarks of the prophet: "We see him constantly located at the centre of the kingdom of Judah, in Jerusalem itself, in close relations, too, with the royal house, and entrusted with the most important public affairs."† The same writer points out that Jerusalem was only the point of outlook whence Isaiah viewed the whole world related in any way to Jerusalem. That world cannot better be summed up than in the words of a recent writer: "Assyria to the north, powerful and on the offensive, but hampered by Babylon; Egypt on the south, weakened and in reserve; all the cities and States between turning their faces desperately northwards, but each with an ear bent back for the promises of the laggard southern power, and occasionally sup-

* This interpretation of the phrase צֶכֶח יְהוָה is in better harmony with the context than either of the others usually adopted: (1) as a direct reference to the Messiah, or (2) as referring merely to fertility of soil. It need not, indeed, be limited to spiritual blessings, but naturally includes all that springs from Jehovah's gracious power. Cf. Gen. xix. 25 (Hebrew); Ps. lxxv. 11, lxxxv. 11; Isa. xlv. 8, lxi. 11; Hos. x. 12.

† *Prophets of the Old Testament*, Translation, Vol. ii, p. 2.

ported by its subsidies."* To guide successfully the destinies of the little Judean State was a most difficult task, and the faith of her statesmen was sorely tried. There was the double temptation to distrust Jehovah and to trust in a foreign alliance, the danger of a diversion of faith from its true reliance to a false stay. The combating of this danger was the great work of Isaiah's public ministry. The fundamental dogma of his political creed was *faith*, faith in Jehovah of Hosts. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (vii. 9), is its negative statement. Its positive statement is, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence is your strength" (xxx. 15). National salvation only by patient faith in Jehovah is the burden of his court preaching.

The first crisis came when Rezin and Pekah invaded Judah, and the prophet's effort was to avert the evil of a foreign alliance, bringing in its train both spiritual and political peril. The specific opportunity for the prophet's intervention came when Jehovah sent him to meet the king in the highway of the fuller's field. Whoever may have written the other historical chapters in the book, this seventh chapter at least is thoroughly Isaianic in its vivid abruptness. Whether the king most despised or feared the prophet whose fiery words had spared none of his sins we do not know; and there was no conciliation in Isaiah's words now. The ministry of hardening had begun, and he taunted the king with being terrified by "two stumps of smoking firebrands," smouldering stubs soon to be extinguished. The real cause of disquiet was unbelief, laid bare in the oracular maxim, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Then follows the test of faith, by offering a visible pledge of Jehovah's protection: "Ask thee a sign from Jehovah thy God, deep unto sheol or high unto the height." The specious hypocrisy of the king's answer only fires the prophet's faith, and in righteous scorn he bursts forth: "Hear ye, O House of David, is it too slight a thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold the maiden is with child and beareth a son and calleth his name Immanuel. Curds and honey will he eat when he knows to reject the evil and to choose the good." Ahaz was judged and self-condemned by the Messianic promise, which was to believers then a "sign," that is, a test and a pledge for present confidence. It was no strange and unheard-of test Isaiah offered. Micah offers the same sure future in similar form (v. 1-3), and God's prophet now had the right to assume that David's heir cherished David's promise. The Messiah flashed before the prophet and was presented to Ahaz as the supreme and final test of faith. To imagine that this "sign"

* G. A. Smith, *Book of Isaiah*, Vol. i, p. 95.

must be of immediate occurrence in order to be applicable to Ahaz is to deprive Messianic prophecy of its great glory. The faith of Isaiah did not eagerly, anxiously demand an immediate deliverance; it was based on Jehovah's promise and awaited Jehovah's own time. Christian faith is always built upon the future as well as the past. Hope is the anchor of the soul and yet in its very essence dwells on the future. The future, certain because it is guaranteed by Jehovah's promise, is the symbol of security in the present, contingent as it is on human action. This future as predicted by the prophet is a sign of judgment too, for the Child will be born in poverty and lowliness. The emphasis is neither on the time nor the manner of the birth, but upon the certainty of God's purpose therein exemplified, a purpose involving both punishment and deliverance.*

In the next discourse (viii. 5, -x. 4) the popular unbelief "refusing the waters of Shiloah that go softly" (viii. 6) is rebuked, and the sure and glorious reign of Immanuel is glowingly painted.

Ahaz sought aid in an Assyrian alliance, and Hezekiah in turn was tempted to trust to Egypt for help to free him from the yoke brought upon Judah by the unbelief of Ahaz. Throughout Hezekiah's reign there was an Egyptian party in his court, who were strong enough to carry the king with them against Isaiah's advice at least twice.† This party of scornful men, rulers of the people, are confronted by the prophet, just as Ahaz was, with the sure promise of Jehovah. In Isaiah's preaching on the question of an Egyptian alliance, the sure destiny of Zion is contrasted with the fate of heathen nations, and the covenant of Jehovah with the lying covenants of a faithless policy. The Egyptian alliance is a covenant with death and sheol; the covenant of the Lord Jehovah is a founda-

*The difficulties that have been so much discussed in connection with this passage (vii. 14ff.) arise from several things. One is the attempt to make it primarily a prediction of a miraculous conception. That is only incidentally implied, though properly enough quoted by Matthew. Another is a wrong idea of what is meant by a sign (אֵימָה). Exodus iii. 12 furnishes an example of a "sign" taken from the future. The point here is that faith in God's presence in the future (God with us, יְהוָה עִמָּנוּ) involves faith in God's help now. A third cause of difficulty is the failure to recognize the time relation of prophecy. There is no evidence that Isaiah knew when the Advent would take place. The *perspective* of prophecy, exhausting history, as it were, of time intervals, here brings together the Assyrian desolation and Immanuel sharing the distress of the people. Micah iii exhibits a similar perspective. The description of the Child (ix. 5) shows that Immanuel is the Messiah, and most commentators accept it: Delitzsch, Cheyne, Briggs, Driver, G. A. Smith, Orelli, Dillmann, etc. Schultz (*A. T. Theologie*, fourth ed., p. 776ff.), Riehm (*Mess. Prophecy*, p. 149), Kuenen (*Prophets*, p. 474), W. Robertson Smith (*Prophets of Israel*, p. 272), Duhm (*Theologie der Propheten*, p. 163) deny all Messianic reference.

† Isa. xxviii. 14f., xxix. 15, xxx. 1ff., xxxi. 1. The two occasions are the invasion of Sargon (711) and of Sennacherib (702).

tion stone in Zion, "a tried stone, a precious cornerstone of sure foundation."* These politicians, like Ahaz, strove to hide their counsel and Isaiah confronts them with the sure promise which his faith sees as if near to fulfillment, "Is it not yet a very little time and Lebanon shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field as a forest?" (xxix. 15ff.). The thirtieth and thirty-first chapters give a two-fold answer to the unbelieving children who go to Egypt for help. First it is utterly futile. Their trust shall be confusion, a shame and a reproach (xxx. 4f.). Egypt's name is Arrogance-Indolence (xxx. 7), and Israel trusting in her is a bulging wall ready to fall (xxx. 13). The Messianic picture is again presented, a land fertile, well watered, and the people serving God in truth (xxx. 19-26). Jehovah's jealous care is likened to that of the lion growling over his prey, and his anxious solicitude to that of hovering birds (xxxi. 4f.); thus emphasizing in every way the certainty of God's purpose. In the Book of Burdens (xiii-xxvii) and the Apocalyptic vision of judgment (xxiv-xxvii) Zion stands secure amid the wreck of empires and the desolation of the earth. The utter desolation of Babylon is only a preparation for Jehovah's compassion to His people (xiv. 1f.). Philistia shall melt away, but Zion founded by Jehovah remains a secure refuge (xiv. 32). Again in Zion, ruled in mercy and swift justice by a successor of David, shall the outcasts of Moab take shelter (xv. 4f.). Judah shall be first a terror to Egypt, then one of a triple alliance between herself and her old enemies, Egypt and Assyria (xix. 17, 23-25). What grander example of faith could there be than Isaiah fearlessly predicting the safety of the little State and her glorious future, while the whole world, east and west, was surging in great waves of war over rock-bound Jerusalem. The guarantee of this faith is the Messianic promise, which is the basis of the prophet's arguments and appeals. The striking lesson is that Isaiah applies his highest ideals to the most practical purposes. The question before him is one of practical statesmanship,—forming or not forming a foreign alliance; but his theology determined and idealized his political counsels. With his choicest and most spiritual weapons he fought the spirit of political unbelief.

Isaiah spoke not only to sinners, but also to saints, and to the Church as well as the State. Sinners needed to be awakened, saints to be strengthened. The same faith that served to steady the policy of the government was required to comfort the faint-hearted.

* xxviii. 16. The denunciation of false covenants shows that the stone is the true object of faith, which in Isaiah is Jehovah's purpose. To regard the stone as Jehovah or Zion is to introduce an unnecessary incongruity of figure, for Jehovah lays it in Zion. It is, as Dillmann says, "God's work of salvation already begun," or "the divine election of Zion" (Orelli, *Mess. Proph.*, p. 287).

"In Isaiah's day undoubtedly the most urgent problem was the continuance of the Church upon earth."* That Church was necessary for the fulfillment of God's purpose, as was no other earthly institution. When the mass seemed to apostatize Isaiah was ready to gather his children and his disciples, and patiently wait the coming of Jehovah (viii. 16f.). Already near the beginning of his ministry he had those whom he instructed in divine truth. For such as these he had a ministry of comfort: and what was his Gospel? Not the prospect of life eternal with God in Jesus Christ; much less the hope of personal immunity from peril. The source of comfort is the Messianic promise, and yet that age was always future and always in the period beyond the next one. First judgment, then mercy. The king of Assyria shall come as a great river, overflowing its banks and covering over the whole of Immanuel's land (viii. 7f.). After a night of gloom is promised the great light. The comfort offered is first that Jehovah reigns and is present in every act of history. Judgment is no play of brute forces, not a tornado sweeping through the forest; but an axe wielded by the Almighty. "Ho Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation . . . shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? . . . as if a rod should wield them that lift it up" (x. 5, 15). And after judgment comes mercy. The only land that now is being ravaged by the Assyrian oppressor, and is in deep darkness and distress, shall see the great light. Zebulon and Naphtali now in contempt shall be made glorious (viii. 23, ix. 1f.).†

Two discourses in particular are intended to comfort those in trial. The first (x. 5-xii. 6) belongs to the time of Sargon's invasion and the second (xxxiii) to that of Sennacherib's. The former contains the fullest description of the Messianic period found in the first half of this book. In the great vision one ray of hope illuminated the cloud, the hope of the remnant; "the holy seed is the stock thereof" (vii. 13). This comfort is offered the Lord's people, "A remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob unto Mighty God" (x. 21). "This remnant shall be gathered from Assyria and Egypt, Pathros and Cush, Elam and Shinar, Hamath and the isles of the sea" (xi. 11). The causes of present distress, the mutual jealousy of Judah and Ephraim and the marauding incursions of Philistines, Arab nomads, Moab and Ammon, shall cease (xi. 13ff.). Present injustice shall pass away and "the shoot from the stock of Jesse" "shall judge the poor with righteousness." This golden age

* G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. i, p. 390.

† Verses 1-4 show that there is an interval between chaps. vii and viii, so that the latter falls in the midst of the war, possibly when Sargon was ravaging Zebulon and Naphtali.

shall destroy war and even the animal creation shall participate in the universal peace (xi. 1-9). Such was the message of Isaiah to those who doubtless were hearing hourly bulletins of the approach of the Assyrian army. The church in the wilderness has always fondly pictured the blessings of Canaan. Our grandest hymns of heaven come from the gloom of the dark ages, and just so the Messianic hope glowed most brightly when men needed most its warmth and light. In chap. xxxiii the comfort is addressed still more directly to the righteous. To them, contrasted with the sinners in Zion, is presented a picture drawn in most exquisite poetic imagery. When all hope of peace was past, and warriors and politicians were in despair (xxxiii. 7f.) Isaiah assured the righteous: "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty, and shall behold a land of broad expanse. Thy heart shall nurse on the terror: 'where is the assessor? where is the weigher? where is he that counted the towers?' Thou shalt not see the fierce people, a people of deep, inaudible lip, of stammering, unintelligible tongue" (xxxiii. 17-19). Zion is a quiet habitation in the midst of a land of broad rivers, safe from attacking galleys, while the Assyrian force is like a becalmed and helpless ship, the prey of the lame (xxxiii. 21-24).^{*} Peace like a river is the comfort to beleaguered Jerusalem.

Three great purposes governed Isaiah's preaching—the moral reformation of the people, the maintenance of a national policy inspired by faith in Jehovah and the comforting of the faithful. The corresponding prophetic ideas are the holiness of the Messianic city, the stability of the Messianic covenant and the abundance of the Messianic salvation. In its development the Messianic teaching exactly fits the needs of the actual present which is never lost sight of. Nothing can describe Isaiah better than Dr. Stalker's description of the prophetic order: "No Home Secretary is as well acquainted with his own country, and no Foreign Secretary with the affairs of foreign countries. It was their vocation to be sensitively alive to all the influences near or remote, by which their native land could be affected."[†] In the fulfillment of this practical duty, the Messianic ideal was used. It was not the fervid rhapsody of an enraptured poet. It was the test applied by the preacher of righteousness to the daily living of his people. It inspired the

^{*} Surely it is unnecessary with most commentators (Delitzsch, Cheyne, Driver, Dillmann) to insist that, because Assyria was not on the sea coast, the becalmed ship must be Jerusalem. Such nicety might be expected of a scientific treatise on naval warfare, but not here. It seems also hypercritical to insist that the feminine suffix, *יְהוּדָה*, excludes Assyria. The prophet may more easily have had the word *יָם* in mind, perhaps in a collective sense, "fleet" (cf. 2 Kgs. x. 22), than Jerusalem.

[†] *The Preacher and His Models*, p. 64.

political wisdom of the king's most sagacious adviser, as well as tender comfort to humble believers.

Immediately on passing into the fortieth chapter of Isaiah the student finds that he has left behind him the wars of Sennacherib, only to find himself in the midst of a battlefield of critics. Heretofore differences in opinion have been measured by years, but now by generations. The character of the prophecy has also changed. Evidently the prophet had leisure to compose carefully and to dwell on the different phases of his theme. The purpose of this second book of Isaiah is indicated in the first sentence of the opening chapter, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God" (xl. 1). It is especially a remnant to whom this comfort is addressed (xlvi. 3, xlv. 20); and the starting-point of God's mercy is in a return from exile; but it goes far beyond such an event and includes far more than any mere historical process. Beginning with an exile in Babylon, a restoration by Cyrus and a repeopling of Jerusalem, the prophetic vision broadens and heightens and extends into the future until the restoration becomes nothing less than a new creation, and Zion is no longer comparable with any earthly capital. This Messianic vision is not only more complete and incomparably grander than any other in Scripture, but it is strikingly different. The point of view is different. The process of redemption is seen from the Godward side. The judges, the rulers, even the king himself, are no longer described, while the coming of Jehovah, the new creation by His Spirit, the walls of His building, and the wonderful historical process by which Jehovah makes known His own righteousness by glorifying His people, are the themes of prophecy. Israel is an elect servant, destined by divine election to service. The central figure is no longer the Messianic king, but the mysterious servant who seems scarcely distinguished from the people, yet is strangely despised and rejected by them, and more strangely still by this very humiliation and rejection triumphs for them. The most plausible explanation of this change is that it is due to a change of time and place; that an unknown prophet speaks to exiles about to return to Palestine. Some of the difficulties of such a theory are apparent on its face; the very suggestion that the greatest of the prophets is an Unknown, for example. Here we are concerned with the question only so far as the Messianic teaching is involved. Generally speaking, the exegesis is remarkably free from those elements of time and place so important in the earlier chapters, and the comparison of the Messianic prophecy with history must be general and not specific. We propose to touch on the relation of two of the great dramatic conceptions of the prophet to history. These conceptions are the Restoration and the Servant.

The Restoration begins with the return from exile, which is a prominent thought of the last twenty-seven chapters, and is also recognized in the earlier chapters.* In the latter this feature of the Messianic teaching is found along with abundant proof that they belong to Isaiah's own age. Is this the case with the later chapters? Do they reflect a return which was very near at hand and whose conditions were clearly apprehended? With the return is involved a marvelous transformation, which is poetically described in the imagery of a physical change, unless we understand a literal description of a physical change.† Has the prophet here in mind the return through the Arabian Desert from Babylon to Jerusalem? This is the usual explanation of these passages, and the main thought is said to be the return to the Land, and not the transformation of the Land itself.

For example, in reading chap. xxxv, must we follow Dillmann and think of the desert between Babylon and Palestine as "blossoming like a rose?" Or is Cheyne nearer right when he says: "This is a description not of the joyous return of the Jewish exiles from Babylonia (an inveterate error which I fear will not soon be eradicated), but of the glorious condition of Israel after the return, which the prophet involuntarily identifies with the Messianic Age. . . . This is, I think, the only explanation that does justice to the group of chapters of which chap. xxxv forms a part?"‡ This view is certainly in harmony with the general tenor of prophecy. The power of vengeance always leaves a waste and uninhabited land, a wilderness, מִדְבָּר.§ Thus in xxxii. 9-20 the land shall grow up with thorns and briars, and be forsaken and deserted. Afterwards this wilderness shall become a fruitful field. Chap. xxxv stands in similar contrast to the terrible judgment in chap. xxxiv. Usually in chaps. xl-lxvi the point of view is after judgment, which has already passed on Judah and left the land waste and desolate—a state which has long continued.¶ Jerusalem is in ruins, as are the other cities of Judah. Chap. xl begins with the announcement of Jehovah's return through the wilderness, which is the glad news of the book. With Him Jehovah brings the people, the exiles. The main thought is not whence, but whither, and it is often explicitly the waste places of Zion that will be restored and made glorious.¶ Elsewhere the wilderness through which the

* Cf. x. 21, xi. 11ff., xxvii. 10; Micah vii. 12.

† The chief passages are xxxv, xl. 3-8, xli. 17-20, xliii. 19f., li. 3, lii. 9, lv. 12f. Cf. also xxxii. 13-20, xlv. 26ff., xlviii. 21, xlix. 19, lviii. 12, lxi. 4.

‡ *Commentary*, 3d ed., Vol. i, p. 198.

§ xxvii. 10, xxxii. 13ff., xlii. 15, xiv. 17, xxiii. 13f.; Hosea ii. 3; Joel iii. 19; Zeph. ii. 13; Jer. iv. 26, xii. 10ff., xxii. 6f., i. 12f.

¶ xlv. 6ff., lxiii. 18, lxiv. 10f., lviii. 12, lxi. 4.

¶ xlv. 26ff., xlix. 19, li. 3, lii. 9, lxi. 4.

exiles pass is meant; but what wilderness is this? In chap. xl there is nothing to indicate what wilderness is thought of. Delitzsch thinks it is around Babylon. Cheyne thinks "the importunity of faith" insists on going through the desert from Babylon to Palestine instead of around by the usual route through Palmyra. Orelli in this way finds a symbolic reference to the miraculous track of fertility and blessing along the way of God's revelation.* But why not think of Jehovah as coming through the wilderness in which the desolated city is pictured? The way of Jehovah is to Jerusalem, and the herald voices, in v. 9f., are those of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. In xli. 17-20, the contrast is between exiles wandering in a parched land and then dwelling in a watered and wooded country, without any hint of a return through the desert. The passages xliii. 19f. and xlvi. 21 refer to a return from Babylon, but the latter shows what effect the exodus from Egypt under Moses has on the poetic imagery. Ch. lv. 12 is too evidently figurative to require remark. Ch. xxxv is the longest of the passages. A return of the exiles is predicted, but there is no indication whence they come, or that the highway is more than a great road for pilgrims.

There is not a single passage in Isaiah that contains a definite reference to the Arabian desert as the route of returning exiles. The villages of Kedar and the inhabitants of Sela are called on to praise the Lord, but so are the coast lands and *the ends of the earth* (xlii. 10f.; cf. also xviii). The whole conception is not in the realm of prosaic geography, but is highly poetical, based on two fundamental thoughts—Jerusalem desolated in the midst of a wasted country and a new exodus from bondage with Jehovah Himself or His servant as leader. The result of pressing this Messianic figure,—for it is national only in its starting-point,—into close conformity with the theory of an exilic authorship, is to lose sight of the greater in the less, and to forget the redemption of the land in the lesser glory of the return. The spiritual conception keeps breaking through the imagery, and shows how the mind of the prophet went beyond the return of exiles to Palestine. The wilderness "shall rejoice even with joy and singing . . . they shall see the glory of Jehovah" (xxxv. 2). "Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Judea" (lii. 9). "The beasts of the field shall honor me, the jackals and the ostriches" (xliii. 20).

The truth is that the Messianic salvation as represented here is influenced in form by the idea of a return from exile, and most profoundly affected too, but only in outline and not in details, so that the teaching is applicable to almost any one needing comfort either because of an exile in certain prospect or in actual fact. The attempt

* *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 378.

to find a more circumstantial reflection of the exile, instead of helping, confuses the exegesis; and is out of harmony with the rich poetic imagery. The great event so dramatically described is the entrance into a wasted land, which welcomes with new life and universal rejoicing the home-coming of the exiles. Preliminary to this new entrance into Canaan is a second exodus, but it is the wilderness of Judea and not of Sin or Kadesh-Barnea that the prophet sees so marvelously transformed. He does not wander in the desert, but hastens to enter the promised land and the temple-city. The event is practically the same described again in the personification of Zion, the mother city, who is bereaved of her children, forsaken by her husband, left desolate and in despair; and who moans in her grief, "Jehovah hath forsaken me and the Lord hath forgotten me" (xlix. 14). The first voice of comfort is that of Jehovah Himself: "Fear not . . . for thy Maker is thine husband, Jehovah of Hosts is his name: and the Holy One of Israel is thy Redeemer" (liv. 5). With this is the promise, "I will bring thy seed from the East and gather thee from the West; I will say to the North, Give up, and to the South, Keep not back; bring my sons from far and my daughters from the ends of the earth" (xliii. 5f.). What can be more exquisitely pathetic than Zion's welcome of these children of her bereavement as she exclaims in glad surprise: "Who hath borne me these . . . and who hath brought them up? Behold I was left alone, these where were they" (xlix. 21)? Kings and queens bring them home, serving as nursing fathers and nursing mothers; and ships from Tarshish like clouds of doves come with swift wing bringing back her children (xlix. 23, lx. 8f.). Finally the widowed and bereaved city is adorned as a bride, her walls are built never again to be destroyed (liv. 11-17, lx). The whole conception is elaborated with a profusion of poetic imagery and an exquisiteness of spiritual feeling, that are unrivaled in the world's literature. To restrict the prophet's vision to the rebuilding and repopling of Jerusalem is preposterous and outrages every dictate of æsthetic taste as well as sound exegesis. "The person addressed is not the ruined city of Jerusalem but the ideal Zion, who is practically identical with the ideal or spiritual Israel." * In passing, it may be noticed that if the prophecy transcends any possible restoration from Babylon, it likewise transcends any literal return to Palestine in any age. Modern exegesis recognizes the spirituality of the conception of this second Book of Isaiah, but leaves a very real difficulty without adequate explanation. There is no dividing line between the return of the exiles from captivity and the Messianic age. That return is the beginning of the

* Cheyne, *Commentary*, ii, p. 53.

glorious redemption. If both are future it is in accordance with the method of prophecy to connect them in this way; just as the judgment on Babylon in chap. xiii and on Edom in chap. xxxiv is the starting point for the judgment of the whole world. If the earlier event belongs to the immediate future or present, and is not merely dramatically represented as present, it seems far less natural. Although Isaiah in chap. vii seems to bring Immanuel into the near future, the next discourse shows that the prophet distinguished between "the first" and "the last time" (viii. 23, ix. 1). Intervening judgment separated Isaiah from the final and lasting redemption, while the fortieth chapter begins *after judgment*. That this point of view is ideal is shown by chaps. lvi to lix; and it follows that an exilic authorship idealizes the present or very near future and makes it part of the Messianic age. The fuller and more glorious the Messianic vision, the greater the difficulty in bringing it so near, and the greater the contradiction between the Messianic and denunciatory portions of the last twenty-seven chapters.

The interpretation of the chapters that describe the servant of Jehovah is a most fascinating and intricate problem, which can be stated here only as it is affected by the historical setting of the prophecy. All are agreed that the conception is a complex one, first including the actual Israel as a mass and then limited to the righteous part of the nation; but here the divergence begins and different replies are made to the question, Who is the suffering servant in whom this complex conception culminates? Doubtless every reader's first impression is that the fifty-third chapter refers to an individual; and this has always been the view of the Church, although it is not essential to finding in it a real prophecy of Jesus Christ. It has already been pointed out that the restoration after exile and the Messianic salvation are not distinguished in this prophecy. As Delitzsch says: "The dawn of salvation, not merely for Israel but for all men, is viewed in connection with the close of the exile, and is ever associated with the restoration of the people now in exile."* This fusing of the two deliverances brings the servant into relation with both the restoration and the salvation. This is notably illustrated in ch. xlix, where the servant "despised of man" (v. 7) makes the people to inherit the desolate heritages (v. 8), and is also a light to the Gentiles (v. 6).

The difficulty of conceiving of the servant as undergoing the life of suffering and the death of contumely, and also being the agent in effecting the restoration, is apparent. These elements might be blended in the perspective of distance, but how could any one just before the exile, standing at the threshold of the new age, put his-

* *Commentary*, 4th ed., ii, p. 233.

tory in such a form? George Adam Smith * attempts to meet the difficulty, first by pleading the parallel of chap. ix, and secondly by denying that the suffering servant is related to the restoration. The parallel of chap. ix fails, for there a period of judgment intervenes before the deliverance; and to suppose that Isaiah looked for an immediate fulfillment is to contradict chaps. x, xi, predicting a wide dispersion. The denial of the connection in thought between the suffering servant and the restoration requires severing the section lii. 13–liii from preceding chapters, and supposing that the “despised and rejected of men” is not he “whom man despiseth and the nation abhorreth” (xlix. 7). Plain exegesis undoubtedly in this case suffers in the interest of a critical theory. The fusing into a single personality of the various offices, prophetic, royal and priestly, and including events that occurred before the Advent as well as the consummation which is still future, may be difficult to conceive of; but it certainly is the result of fair exegesis and is in accord with the inspired Christology of New Testament writers. The difficulty of thinking of this mysterious person as being conceived of by the prophet as connected with his own age, has influenced such recent commentators as are at once evangelical and have adopted the theory of the exilic authorship, to give up the personality of the servant. The interpretation resulting can best be stated by quoting. The prophet’s conception is thought to be “in one sense a creation of the prophet’s mind, though more real to him than any being of flesh and blood, the ideal Israel itself, of whom the actual Israel of any generation was but a rude embodiment and earthly hull.” † The views of Driver and Dillmann do not differ substantially from this statement. It is no assumption to say that this interpretation is a result of the critical theory and not of direct exegesis; and it may well be doubted whether scholars can long retain both the exilic authorship and the personality of the servant. Here as often a specious gain may disguise a substantial loss; and on its exegetical side the question calls for careful consideration. The general perspective of the Messianic picture in these chapters, blending the return from Babylon with the Messianic age, indicates that the prophet looked upon the former as ideally and not actually present, and the theory of exilic authorship in important particulars modifies without clarifying the exegesis.

OROMIAH, PERSIA.

W. A. SHEDD.

* *The Book of Isaiah*, ii, p. 270f.

† A. B. Davidson, *Expositor*, 1884, p. 451.