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THE PROPHECY IN ISAIAH IX 1-7

(HEB. VIII 23—IX 6).

THIS passage of Scripture, which is appointed to be read as the First Lesson on Christmas Day, is of supreme importance to the student of Messianic prophecy. If the translation given in the Revised Version be substantially correct, the Incarnation is here clearly set forth, since the prophet speaks of one who is *born*, who receives the name 'Mighty God'.

In the first place we naturally enquire whether the prophecy before us is complete. That there is room for diversity of opinion as to its limits is shewn by the difference between the Hebrew and the English in the division of the chapters. It will however be generally admitted that this uncertainty only affects its beginning, since its end is clearly marked. That the English versions rightly follow the quotation in St Matthew iv 15, 16 in connecting *v. 1*¹ with the following section is certainly probable; for *v. 2* is a perfectly natural continuation of *v. 1*, which would be a most abrupt ending to a prophecy. It is however a question whether *v. 1* should be connected with the last verse of the preceding chapter, which it strongly resembles in phraseology. But since ix 1 cannot originally have stood *immediately* after viii 22, and there is undoubtedly here a *hiatus*, it seems better that an examination into the meaning of the prophecy should begin at ix 1.

Although the translation of the Revised Version is a great im-

¹ Unless otherwise specified, the numbering of the verses adopted in this article is that of the English version.

provement upon that of the Authorized Version, it is nevertheless insufficiently accurate to be used as the basis of a critical enquiry. It will therefore be convenient before discussing the reference and date of this prophecy to give first an exact translation of it. A fairly literal rendering will run as follows¹ :—

‘For it is not dark to the land that suffers affliction. In the former time He (*sc.* Jehovah) made of no account the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali ; but in the latter time He has brought glory upon the Way of the Sea, the District beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light : upon the dwellers in a land of deep gloom light has shined. Thou hast made the exultation abundant, Thou hast made the rejoicing great : they (*sc.* the inhabitants of the land) rejoice before Thee as with the rejoicing at the harvest, as (men) exult when they divide the spoil. For the yoke by which he (*sc.* Israel) drags his burden, and the rod of his back, the staff of his taskmaster, Thou hast broken as in the day of the victory over Midian. For every boot of heavily booted one and bloodstained garment shall be made into a bonfire, into fuel of fire. For a Child has been born to us, a Son has been given to us ; and the principality has come upon his back ; and his name has been called, Marvellous Designer, Mighty Hero, Father (*i. e.* mentor and guide) in perpetuity, Prince of peace. To the increase of the peaceful principality there shall be no end upon the throne and kingdom of David, to stablish it, and to confirm it in justice and righteousness from henceforth for evermore. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will effect this.’

We have next to consider the authorship, reference, and date.

Certainly if we argue only from the occurrence in this passage of words characteristic of Isaiah, a strong case can be made out for his authorship. Thus there is a striking similarity between ix 4 (Heb. ix 3) and x 27. The word ‘taskmaster’ or ‘exactor’ (גִּבּוֹר) occurs in iii 12 (R. V. ‘oppressors’). ‘Fuel of fire’ (מִזְבֵּחַ אֵשׁ) is found again in v. 18, and nowhere else in the Old Testament. The name ‘Marvellous Designer’ (פֶּלֶא יוֹצֵר) finds a parallel in the phrase ‘He is marvellous in design’ (הִפְלִיא עֲצָוָה), R. V. ‘which is wonderful in counsel’) in xxviii 29. ‘Mighty Hero’ (אִל גִּבּוֹר) is met with again in x 21 (R. V. ‘the mighty

¹ For a full discussion of the translation see Additional Note A.

God), a passage which certainly seems to be a combination of ideas already familiar to those to whom it is addressed. 'Justice' (R. V. 'judgement') and 'righteousness' (צדקה and צדק) are coupled together in i 27, v 7, xxviii 17, though the combination is too common to base any argument upon it; and, finally, the phrase 'the zeal of Jehovah of hosts will effect this' is repeated *verbatim* in xxxvii 32, where however it is noteworthy that the word employed for 'remnant' is שְׁאֵרִיתַי and not שְׁאֵרַי as in x 21.

Assuming then, for the sake of argument, the Isaianic authorship of this prophecy, to what period can we assign it? Uziah, by whose death the prophet dates his call (vi 1), is proved by inscriptions to have been alive in 740 B. C.¹ As it is impossible from the statements of the Old Testament that he can have lived long after this date, we may reasonably assign Isaiah's call to 740-739 B. C. The history of his subsequent life, as far as it is known to us, is briefly as follows. The infatuation of the ruling classes in Judah had already impressed itself upon Isaiah's mind, and in the name of his eldest son, Shear-jashub (שְׁאָרְיָשׁוּב), born in or shortly after 739 B. C., Isaiah shewed his conviction of the impending ruin of his country. During the following years he denounced the lack of true religion and the idolatry rife in Judah. In 735 B. C. the allied forces of Damascus and North Israel invaded Judah with the object of removing Ahaz from the throne, in order that there might be no doubt about Judah's co-operation in defensive action against the Assyrians. Jerusalem indeed appears to have escaped, but the allied forces penetrated as far south as Elath, and Judah evidently suffered severely. Then it was that Isaiah, taking with him his little son Shear-jashub as the living text of the sermon he had preached some four years before, met Ahaz at the memorable interview recorded in chap. vii. Notwithstanding the prophet's protests, Ahaz invoked the aid of the king of Assyria. Thereupon Tiglath Pileser III (II, as he is commonly called) invaded Gilead and Galilee (2 Kings xv 29), carrying off many of the inhabitants to Assyria. He slew Pekah, placed Hoshea on the throne, and advanced as far south as Gaza, which he took and plundered. Two years later Ahaz, who now found the yoke of Assyria firmly fastened upon his neck, was summoned to Damascus, which had just been taken

¹ See Additional Note B.

by Tiglath Pileser, to meet his suzerain. Of the next few years we have little information. In 728 Tiglath Pileser claims to have received tribute from Ahaz. Egypt soon began to intrigue with the king of Israel, and presumably with the king of Judah; with the result that about 725 B. C. Hoshea, king of Israel, refused his tribute. The result was another invasion of the northern kingdom by Shalmaneser IV, the deposition of Hoshea, and the siege of Samaria, which was taken by Sargon in 722 B. C. In 720 Sargon defeated the Egyptian army with the allied forces of Hanno, king of Gaza, at Raphiah on the border of Egypt. In 712 B. C. (according to one view) Merodach Baladan of Babylon sent an embassy to Hezekiah with the object of ascertaining what help against Assyria could be obtained in the west; but it is possible that the date of this embassy is some eight or nine years later. But at any rate in 711 B. C. 'the people of Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab were speaking treason', whereupon Sargon besieged Ashdod (Isa. xx); and though we do not know that any fighting took place in Judah, he calls himself 'the subjector of the land of Judah'. This however may possibly refer to an earlier period. In 705 B. C. Sargon died, and attempts seem to have been made unsuccessfully by the Philistines to induce Judah to join in a revolt against Assyria; but in 701, Hezekiah, having been at last persuaded to join the Philistine alliance, rebelled; with the result that Sennacherib invaded Palestine, captured forty-six strong cities of Judah, which he afterwards added to the Philistine territory, besieged Jerusalem, and exacted an enormous fine from Hezekiah, from whom he took many captives. It is clear that, whether the destruction of Sennacherib's army (2 Kings xix, Isa. xxxvii) be assigned to this campaign or to one that took place some years later (and in the present state of our knowledge it is scarcely possible to decide with certainty), Sennacherib inflicted on Judah a blow from which the kingdom never recovered.

It is therefore evident that during the whole of Isaiah's ministry the dark shadow of Assyria fell upon Palestine. There is indeed no known period in the prophet's life when the glorious outburst of triumph contained in the passage before us, striking as it does a note of almost Easter gladness, would be suitable. The yoke never was broken in the days of Hezekiah.

If therefore Isaiah be the author of this prophecy we can only explain it as a vision or ideal description, in which the prophet transports himself into the future, and surveys the victory which he believes will then have been given. But an ideal description of the future will naturally be conditioned by the circumstances of the present. What circumstances then of the time of Isaiah could have occasioned or conditioned the outburst of this Old Testament *Te Deum*?

Having regard to the prominence given in *v. 6* to the *birth* of a 'son', it might seem possible to assign this prophecy to the occasion of the birth of an heir to the throne. But a careful examination of the passage shews that to do so would be to miss its meaning. For the reason given for the joy and exultation (that is, the light which has shone on the darkness) is the *present* breaking of a yoke, and the *future* destruction of the equipment of war. But since the reason given for the present breaking of the yoke is the actual birth of a 'child', whose title implies a mighty warrior, it is obvious that it is the 'child' himself who is represented as the instrument in the breaking of the yoke. In other words, the reference is not to any *child, as such*, but to an *offspring*, 'a son', that has been given to Israel and has delivered his people.

We may therefore safely disregard this view of the prophecy, and look for another indication of date. Now the phrase 'the latter time' as contrasted with 'the former time' clearly implies a new era (see, for example, Zech. viii 11, cf. Mal. iii 4). These phrases would not be used respectively of the reigns of two successive kings, unless at least the second reign inaugurated a new state of things. Since, therefore, the reference to the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali might conceivably be understood of Tiglath Pileser's invasion of Galilee in 734, when Ahaz was on the throne of Judah, 'the latter time' would at the earliest refer to the reign of his successor. Unfortunately the biblical chronology of this period is in confusion, and it is impossible to reconcile some of the statements. In the present state of our knowledge it is impossible to decide who was on the throne of Judah when Samaria fell in 722.

But whether Samaria was still existing or not when Hezekiah ascended the throne, it is expressly stated by Tiglath Pileser that

in his campaign of 734 not only Galilee suffered, but the *whole land of Israel*. Not only was Gaza on the south-western border of Canaan taken by the Assyrian king, but he claims to have deported to Assyria 'the whole of the inhabitants of the land of the House of Omri'. Of course such a statement is not to be taken too literally, any more than the assertion (St Mark i 5) that 'all the country of Judaea and all they of Jerusalem' went out to St John the Baptist. We are however justified in affirming, what would not have been suspected if we had possessed the biblical account only, that the *whole* of the northern kingdom, though perhaps in varying degree, suffered from the Assyrian invasion of 734. There were in fact two deportations of captives from North Israel in the eighth century B.C., as there were two deportations of captives from Judah in the sixth.

But in reading the prophecy before us we cannot fail to be struck by one remarkable omission. While the western, eastern, and northern portions of the kingdom of Israel are mentioned, nothing is said of its very heart and centre, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, the district which was in after times known as the province of Samaria. Is it conceivable that Isaiah, who watched so anxiously the signs of the times, could have pictured the restoration of the Way of the Sea, the District beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations, and have expressed no hope for that portion of the country of which the southern frontier was only some five miles distant from Jerusalem, and which had suffered severely in the same disaster that had overwhelmed Galilee?

It must be confessed that there is no event in the known history of Isaiah which seems to justify the language of this prophecy, if it has reference to actual fact; if on the other hand it be regarded as an ideal for the future, it cannot be shewn to have any relation with the prophet's own time.

But there are other considerations which make it difficult to regard this prophecy as Isaianic. Though it undoubtedly contains words which are characteristic of Isaiah, there are others which it is difficult to ascribe to him, or indeed to any one living in the golden age of Hebrew literature¹. Thus the phrase 'Galilee

¹ The impersonal use of *participles*, as in הָיָה and בָּרָא , is most unusual in Hebrew. In Aramaic it is common. It happens not to occur in the Biblical Aramaic, where however we find an analogous construction with the participle

(the district) of the nations' is one which cannot satisfactorily be accounted for on the supposition that it refers to Assyrian and other settlers after Tiglath Pileser's invasion in 734. There is no evidence, either from the Bible or from the monuments, that any colonists were introduced into Palestine before the fall of Samaria; and though the prophet *might* conceivably pass over the disaster which befell Samaria in 734, it cannot be supposed that he would have ignored the crushing blow which came upon it in 722¹.

Moreover, could Isaiah have used the words 'boot of heavily booted one' (שָׁרְיָן מְבֹרָאֵי)? The reference undoubtedly is to the boot of a warrior. It is however noteworthy that in the graphic description of the readiness of the Assyrian soldiery for war (Isaiah v 27, 28), the prophet says of them that 'the latchet of their shoes' is not unfastened,—a phrase which finds a curious modern parallel in 'the last button of the gaiters'. In this passage the ordinary word for 'shoe' (לֵבַיִת) is used. It is of course possible that, before he had actually come in contact with the Assyrians, Isaiah used the ordinary Hebrew word in speaking of their boots, and that, after actually seeing their equipment, he used the native Assyrian word. But it is difficult to understand why, in this passage, he should have referred to their *boots* at all, unless these were very different from those of his own countrymen. Moreover, as the present writer is informed by Mr Johns, the *sunu* of the Assyrians seems to have been something of the nature of a legging, or rather *puttee*, to protect the legs in marching through thorny places. But we cannot assign the sense of *legging* to the Hebrew word used in the passage before us (שָׁרְיָן), otherwise the adverb 'noisily' or 'heavily' (שָׁרְיָן) would be unexplained. The phrase seems to require *heavy nailed boots*; but there is no proof that these, even if they existed, were the ordinary equipment of the Assyrians, who in the eighth century B. C. are frequently represented as shod merely with a sort of sandal turned up at the heel, or even barefoot.

active-plural; but it is found in the Targums, e. g. עֲקָא י (2 Sam. xxii 7, Ps. xviii 7), עֲקָ י (Ps. xxxi 10, cxix 18), נִאֲרָ יִדְוִן (Amos vi 6, cf. Nahum iii 19), and in Syriac very frequently, as in the phrases ܕܥܩܒܐ ܕܥܩܒܐ, ܕܥܩܒܐ ܕܥܩܒܐ. The use of שָׁרְיָן as masculine is late, as is shewn by the passages quoted below (Additional Note A).

¹ Would a Frenchman within twelve years of 1870 have spoken of 'Alsace and Lorraine of the Germans'?

Again, the phrase of which the exact force may perhaps best be rendered in English by the translation 'shall be made into a bonfire' (הִיָּתָה לְשָׂרִיף) occurs again in the Hebrew Bible only in Isaiah lxiv 10, a passage which is at any rate later than the Exile.

In the next place it is noteworthy that the deliverer is not styled *king*. He receives the *principality* upon the *throne and kingdom of David*. It is not stated that he is descended from David.

But if the passage be later than the time of Isaiah, to what period would its language be suitable? Certainly all the objections to its Isaianic authorship apply still more strongly to any date that can be suggested before the Exile or during the Exile.

Is there any period *after* the Exile? Zechariah, it is true, paints a picture of the future in glowing colours, but the centre of it is *Jerusalem*. Moreover, in his time there was nothing which would give the note of *victory*. Can we find a suitable period still later? Certainly there is nothing in the recorded history of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah which would justify the language of this prophecy. We know, however, that there was an ever-growing jealousy between Judah and the province of Samaria, which at last culminated in the schism of the latter, from which time onwards 'the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans'. As Ben Sira says (ch. l 25, 26):—

Two nations my soul abhorreth,
And the third is no people.
The inhabitants of Seir and Philistia
And the foolish nation that dwelleth in Sichem.¹

After the time of the Samaritan schism the absence of any mention of Samaria would be natural in a thanksgiving for the restoration of Jehovah's people. But from this date onwards there is but one period, the Maccabaeon, which could in any way warrant such an outburst of praise as we find in this chapter. Unfortunately, the date of the Psalter is still too much disputed to allow us to argue from it; but it is impossible to read this prophecy without at least being reminded of those magnificent

¹ Dr. Taylor's translation. The Hebrew is

הַשְּׂרִיף אֵינוֹ עַם :	בְּשֵׁי גֵרִים קָצָה בְּנֵי
וְעַם נְבִל וְדָר בְּשִׁכְמָה :	יֹשְׁבֵי שֵׂעִיר וְפִלִישְׁתִּים

outbursts of praise after victory which we find in such Psalms as xcvi and xcviiii, which are by many scholars assigned to the Maccabean period.

We may therefore enquire whether what we know of this period would justify the language of the chapter before us.

1 Maccabees iv 1-25 relates the success of Judas at Emmaus, when the victorious Jews pressed upon the flying enemy as far as Gezer, Ashdod and Jamnia. Shortly afterwards the victory of Beth Zur gave the Maccabees the mastery of Jerusalem (1 Macc. iv 28-35). This was speedily followed by the dedication of the Temple and the fortification of Mount Zion (*ib.* iv 36-61); after which Simon carried out a successful campaign in Galilee, while his brothers Jonathan and Judas advanced victoriously through Gilead (*ib.* v 21-54). We find then in this account a reference to 'the Way of the Sea, the District beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations', but we are scarcely justified in assigning the prophecy before us to this date; for, though the rescuing of the Jews in the places named might be described as the shining of a great light, they can scarcely be said to have been *glorified*, since the Maccabees found it necessary to carry off their Jewish inhabitants into safety at Jerusalem. The yoke of the heathen was not yet broken; moreover, the language of v. 6 of our prophecy requires that *one* leader should be specially prominent.

But in the year 145-144 B.C. Jonathan was confirmed in the high priesthood by Antiochus VI, and Simon was made *σπαρηγὸς* 'from the Ladder of Tyre unto the borders of Egypt' (1 Macc. xi 57-59). Shortly afterwards Jonathan carried out a successful campaign beyond the Jordan; apparently making himself master of the country as far as Damascus (*ib.* 60-62); after which he gained a victory in Galilee, when 3,000 of Demetrius's troops were slain. It is true that it was not till the time of Aristobulus that Galilee¹ became an essentially Jewish province; and by the treacherous capture of Jonathan at Ptolemais the work done there by the sons of Mattathias must have been to some extent undone. But the language of 1 Macc. xii 45-49 seems to imply some greater Jewish influence in Galilee than is actually stated. It is

¹ See Bevan *The House of Seleucus* vol. ii pp. 228, 256. But Josephus says that Aristobulus compelled the *Ituraeans* to be circumcised, referring apparently to the northern or north-eastern portion of Galilee.

at least remarkable that the disaster to Jonathan was not followed up by a general attack upon the Jews: at any rate, Tryphon, after his advance into Gilead, when he put Jonathan to death, made no attempt to hold the country. In 143-142 B.C. Simon gained from Demetrius the confirmation of the grants previously made by him; 'peace and a general amnesty were conceded to the Jews, but more than that, all arrears of taxes were remitted, and for the future the Seleucid renounced any right to claim tax or tribute from the Jewish state. . . . The Jews regarded the King's rescript as the beginning of freedom'¹. 'The yoke of the heathen was taken away from Israel' (1 Macc. xiii 41). Shortly afterwards Gezer was taken, the citadel of Jerusalem surrendered, and in May 141 B.C. Simon held a rejoicing, 'because a great enemy was destroyed out of Israel' (1 Macc. xiii 51).

Allowing for natural Hebrew exaggeration, the language of the prophecy before us well fits this season. The land that was still sore afflicted had seen a great light: the Way of the Sea, the District beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations had been brought to honour, in that they were now to some extent occupied by Jews free to exercise their religion. It seemed an earnest of a more complete restoration of the land of Israel. The Lord had multiplied the exultation; He had increased the joy; for the yoke of the heathen was broken. The old prophecies seemed at last to be fulfilled in the person of Simon. Israel had travailed, and this time not in vain. The child of whom Isaiah had spoken (Isa. vii 14) was born; she whom Micah had described as in labour (Micah v 3) had brought forth; the government had come upon his back; he had proved himself 'a marvellous designer', 'a mighty warrior'; his dynasty would be a permanent one, and its sway would be peaceful; all the hopes for the throne and kingdom of David would now find realization: 'the zeal of Jehovah of hosts would effect this'.

It has already been pointed out that by the 'child' that is born we are not to think of a *child, as such*, but as the offspring given to the nation².

¹ Bevan *The House of Seleucus* vol. ii p. 232.

² The word ילד would certainly be no difficulty to those who were familiar, for example, with the language of Ps. ii 7 'Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee' (אני היום ילדתיך).

But is it possible that such language as we find in this chapter can have been used in the second century B. C.?

It has been pointed out above that the grammar of the first sentence is Aramaic rather than Hebrew, and that the prophecy contains phrases scarcely compatible with Isaianic authorship. It is generally allowed that the First Book of Maccabees was originally written in Hebrew, and it will accordingly serve us well for purposes of comparison. Now the phrase 'Galilee of the Gentiles' occurs in 1 Macc. v 15; in 1 Macc. iii 3 Judas is said to have put on a breastplate 'like a giant', ὡς γίγας. In the Septuagint translation of Isa. iii 2 γίγας corresponds to 'mighty' (גִּבּוֹר); and the phrase found in Ezekiel xxxii 21, R. V. 'the strong among the mighty' (גִּבּוֹרֵי הַגִּבּוֹרִים), which is apparently merely the plural of the 'mighty hero' of the passage before us, is actually rendered in the LXX as γίγαντες. Again in 1 Macc. ii 65 we find a parallel to both the 'Designer' or 'Counsellor' (צִיָּבֵר) and the 'Father in perpetuity' (אֲבִי עַד) of the prophecy. Mattathias is there represented as saying to his sons, 'And behold Simon your brother, I know that he is a *man of counsel*; give ear unto him alway: he shall be a *father* unto you'.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the Hebrew scarcely discriminates between a man and his family or dynasty. Hence there is no difficulty about the perpetuity of Simon's rule. Indeed in 1 Macc. xiv 41 we actually read that 'the Jews and the priests were well pleased that Simon should be their leader and high priest *for ever*, until there should arise a faithful prophet'. The fact that in this passage Simon is styled 'leader', ἡγούμενος (? = רִנָּה) rather than 'king' will illustrate the avoidance of the word 'king' (מֶלֶךְ) in the prophecy before us, the tone of which in general finds an illustration in the language of 1 Macc. xiv 4-14.

But we can go further. Not only is there nothing in this prophecy which militates against the date here suggested; one phrase at least is peculiarly suitable to it. We have seen that the phrase 'boot of heavily booted one' is without a parallel in the Old Testament, and that there is no proof that the Assyrian boots were of a specially heavy description. But nailed boots were a characteristic of the Macedonian soldiery. Under the heading *Crepida*, *Crepidula*, Κρηπίς, Daremberg and Saglio give

the following description: 'Chez les Macédoniens elles font partie du costume national des hommes, et les semelles en sont garnies de clous; c'est une chaussure militaire, propre à la marche, usitée encore au second siècle av. J.-C. dans les armées syriennes; le même détail des clous sous la semelle résulte d'un passage de Plinè sur la découverte de l'aimant par un pâtre du mont Ida. Les compagnons d'Aratus, au moment de s'emparer de Sicyone, dénouèrent leurs crépides pour marcher sans bruit dans la nuit, ce qui prouve qu'il s'agit encore ici d'une chaussure à liens. Dans les *Syracusaines* de Théocrite on voit que la foule des hommes qui se pressent dans les rues d'Alexandrie sont chaussés de crépides.'

The passage just referred to, Theocritus xv 6, is so striking that it deserves quotation. Gorgo, the Syracusan, on the occasion of a military procession in Alexandria, exclaims, *παντᾶ κρηπίδες, παντᾶ χλαμυδηφόροι ἄνδρες*. If, then, in the time of Theocritus the *κρηπίς*, the military boot of the Macedonian soldiery, was so different from the ordinary oriental shoe as to suggest at once a soldier, just as *khaki* does in our days: and if, as we know, these boots were still in use in Syria in the second century B. C.; it is easy to understand how a Hebrew ideal of the inauguration of a reign of peace would naturally begin with the burning of the boots which characterized the hated Syro-Greek soldiery. In fact one cannot but be struck by the similarity between the *κρηπίδες* and *χλαμυδηφόροι ἄνδρες* of Theocritus and the 'boot of heavily booted one and blood-stained garment' of the passage before us, although it is, of course, impossible to limit ^{הַבּוּט} to the meaning *χλαμύς*.

We may then affirm that in language and thought the passage before us would be quite applicable to such an occasion as the rejoicing held in Jerusalem in May 141 B.C. Whether we suppose that it was first written then by one who believed that the prophecies of Isaiah and the other prophets had actually been fulfilled in Simon, or (what is also possible) that a genuine prophecy of Isaiah was modified for the occasion, will depend upon the views which we hold on the subject of prophecy generally. It is the conviction of the present writer that, though there is often, perhaps generally, a deeper meaning in a prophecy than was perceived by those to whom it was first given, it always

had some meaning even to them. In every age God raises up prophets as they are required, and only gives predictions that are to some extent intelligible at the time when they are given.

It will, no doubt, be urged that it is impossible to assign to a date as late as 141 B.C. one section of the book of Isaiah without implying at least the possibility that other sections of the book may belong to the same period. That this is the case is indeed the belief of the present writer; but since the prophecy here discussed, with its Isaianic phraseology and its non-Isaianic outlook, stands to a great extent alone in the book, it seems better that the question of a Maccabaean or pre-Maccabaean date for it should be decided as far as possible without reference to other disputed passages. To those who believe in the existence of Maccabaean Psalms, especially in the second and third books of the Psalter, the argument for a Maccabaean date might be put still more forcibly; but the writer has purposely ignored parallels in this direction, since he believes that sufficient indications of date are to be found in the prophecy itself.

In conclusion it may not be superfluous to consider a difficulty which will doubtless occur to many. It may seem that in the above enquiry into the meaning of the passage before us no account has been taken of what has commonly been considered its most obvious reference, the reference which is familiar to all from the use of this section as the first lesson on Christmas morning. Certainly we need find no fault with such a use, for, like the other hopes and aspirations of Israel, this prophecy finds its complete fulfilment in Him whose birth we then commemorate. But though we recognize this, though we may freely admit that the titles of the 'Child' in the fullest sense which the words could ever convey can be applied to Christ, since He is 'Marvellous Designer, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace', yet we are unable to refer the prophecy primarily to Him for reasons similar to those which prevent us from referring to Him the prophecy of Immanuel.

True the difficulties in this case are not so obvious as those in the Immanuel prophecy, in which the birth of Immanuel is actually to be a sign to Ahaz, and must therefore refer to something in his life-time. It is far more easy to allegorize the breaking of the rod and the yoke than the eating of the curds

and honey of the Immanuel prophecy. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the natural meaning of the words does imply limitations which are unsuitable if primarily referring to Christ. It is not only 'the Way of the Sea, the District beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations', that have seen in Him a great light; for 'all the ends of the world have seen the salvation of our God'.

Some however will feel that, if the subject of this great outburst of joy be originally a man such as Simon was, a politician rather than a saint, one who for the casting down of strongholds trusted not to spiritual but to carnal weapons, and who, if he had lived to some extent as a patriot, died ignominiously in drunkenness, the prophecy is so tainted by its origin as to make it impossible to apply it to the sinless Christ. But because the author did not realize the magnitude of Simon's faults, and in his enthusiasm pitched his expectations too high, his ideal picture does not thereby necessarily lose its value. A great idea once put forward is an indestructible force acting on human thought. What seems mere poetical hyperbole in one generation may be the energizing belief of the next. When once a king had been pictured as a marvellous designer, a mighty hero, a father in perpetuity, and a prince of peace, the ideal king would always thereafter be invested with like attributes. A new conception of kingship would arise, and one which would be capable of endless development. It may truly be said of the Messianic hope that 'it was sown in dishonour, and raised in glory'.

It was not altogether without reason that the ancient Hebrews believed a blessing once given to be irrevocable. 'As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall the Lord's word be that goeth forth out of His mouth: it shall not return unto Him void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleaseth, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it.'

Additional Note A.

The opening words are difficult. The R. V. in the text attempts to connect the prophecy with the preceding verse by translating the first '¶' 'but'. This is a meaning however which we are not justified in assigning to the word, which (except when it introduces a clause in

oratio obliqua) is always a causal particle, whether it refers to a preceding or to a following sentence. After a negative clause, it is true, it may frequently be rendered 'but': this however is due merely to the difference of idiom in Hebrew and English, a clause which in English is contrasted with a foregoing negative being made the explanation of it in Hebrew. We must therefore translate, as in the margin of R. V., 'for', understanding that this and the following verses give the reason for some statement not found in the present text.

The following words have occasioned commentators a good deal of difficulty. The Hebrew is certainly unusual; it is however by no means impossible. In the first clause two words at once arrest our attention, viz. הָיָה and פָּצַח . In form they are *Hoph'al* participles, the latter from the root פָּח , the former from הָיָה or הָיָה . Of the meaning of פָּצַח , assuming the correctness of the text, there can be no doubt: it means 'affliction is caused'¹. The use of the *Hoph'al* is unusual, but it finds a parallel in הָיָה 'rest is given', Lam. v 5. The word הָיָה presents more difficulty. Having regard to the fact that הָיָה (? = הָיָה) occurs in viii 22 it is natural to derive it from הָיָה . This root seems to have in the Hebrew Bible the sense of *darkness* (e. g. הָיָה Job xi 17, הָיָה Amos iv 13, הָיָה Job x 22): it occurs however in Syriac in the sense of *weariness* (= Heb. הָיָה), and we may accordingly translate either 'darkness is caused' or 'weariness is produced'. Upon the whole the former seems the more suitable to the context. The R. V. in its translation 'there shall be no gloom to her that was in anguish' introduces a distinction of time quite unwarranted by the Hebrew. Both participles must be rendered in English by the same tense. We may therefore translate, 'For it is not dark to her' (*sc.* the land) 'that is in affliction'. An objection may be made to this translation on the ground that it presupposes the use of כִּי with a participle, but this construction, though uncommon, is actually found elsewhere, e. g. Ps. xxxviii 15 (Heb.), Job xii 3, xiii 2.

The two following clauses likewise present difficulty. The text is perhaps not altogether above suspicion; but it is translatable, and at any rate the LXX offers nothing better.

According to the accents הָיָה is closely connected with הָיָה , and must therefore be an adjective agreeing with it, 'at the former time'. It is true that הָיָה is usually feminine, whereas הָיָה is masculine; but this does not constitute a fatal objection to the rendering given above, for הָיָה is construed as masculine in the following passages: Isaiah xiii 22, Ezekiel vii 7, 12, Haggai i 2 (probably), Psalm lxxxvi 16 (Heb.), Cant. ii 12, Daniel xi 14, Ezra x 14, 2 Chron. xv 5. A more serious

¹ This impersonal use of the participle may be illustrated by Jeremiah xxx 12; Esther iii 8, cf. Nahum iii 19.

objection is the omission of the noun before the adjective הַאֲחֵרִים in the parallel clause, where we should certainly expect וְכַעֲשֵׂת הַאֲחֵרִים. An almost identical construction, however, occurs in 2 Chron. xxvii 5, and a very similar one in Ezek. x 14, Gen. ii 14.

With the next word וְכִל we reach a question touching the translation of the whole section. Are these Perfects Prophetic Perfects, or do they refer to past time? According to the usual sequence of tenses a Prophetic Perfect is commonly followed by a Perfect with Wāw Consecutive, as in Isa. v 14, xliii 14. In this passage, however, we have a succession of Perfects until we get to וְהִיָּתָה v. 4 (Heb.). Thereafter Perfects are found again, followed by Imperfects with Wāw Consecutive; no hint of a future reference being given till we reach the clause קִנְיַת יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תִּעֲשֶׂה זֶמַח.

The natural inference is that, whatever the date of the prophecy may be, its writer adopts a standpoint from which he looks back at those actions expressed by the Perfects, and forward to their effects still future: which effects he expresses in the one case by the Perfect with Wāw Consecutive (וְהִיָּתָה), in the other by the simple Imperfect (תִּעֲשֶׂה).

But what is the meaning of the contrasted verbs וְכִל and וְהִכְבִּיד? At once we are struck by the fact that they are used in the *Hiph'il*, whereas the *Pi'el* is in each case the more common conjugation. Apart from this passage the *Hiph'il* of קָלַל nowhere has the sense of the *Pi'el*, except in Ezek. xxii 7 and possibly 2 Sam. xix 44; while the *Hiph'il* of כָּבַד always has a sense quite distinct from the *Pi'el*, except that in the phrase 'to harden (or rather 'to make dull') the heart', where the *Hiph'il* is habitually used, we find in one passage only, 1 Sam. vi 6, the *Pi'el*. In the later Hebrew, it is true, there is a marked tendency to use the *Hiph'il* where in the golden age of the language the *Kal* or *Pi'el* would have been used (e. g. הוֹלִיד takes the place of יָלַד and הִקְטִיר and קָטַר); and the choice of conjugation here might be explained on the assumption of late date. Such an explanation however is not probable, for קָלַל in the *Pi'el* is found in a passage as late as Ecclesiastes x 20.

In general, although it is impossible to lay down a hard and fast rule, the difference in meaning of the *Pi'el* and *Hiph'il* (when they both occur) in verbs of which the *Kal* expresses a *state* is as follows: the *Pi'el* means *to treat as though possessing* the quality indicated in the *Kal*; the *Hiph'il* means *to produce* that quality. Thus קָלַל means *to treat as* קָל, as of no account, *to slight, to revile*; הִקְלַל means *to make of no account* (as in Isa. xxiii 9): similarly כָּבַד means *to treat as* כָּבֵד, as heavy, or valuable, *to esteem, to honour*; הִכְבִּיד means *to make heavy* or valuable, *to make honourable*. Substantial justice is done to the conjugation of these verbs in the R. V., which translates, 'In the former

time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time hath he made it glorious'.

But the difficulties do not end here. The word 'land' has in each case the old Accusative termination, usually found after a verb of motion implying *direction towards*. It is true that the vowels *i* and *u* (apparently obsolete case endings) are found not uncommonly in the construct state as connecting-vowels, especially in the later age of the language; and there is no *a priori* reason why the Accusative should not have been used in the same way. Since in this passage the word אֶרֶץ in each case follows a transitive verb, and not a verb of motion, it seems impossible to translate it otherwise than as the direct object of the verb¹. We may therefore render, 'In the former time He (*sc.* Jehovah) made the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali of no account'.

The Masoretic punctuation, which puts the Ethnāh at הַכְּבִיר evidently regards both verbs הַסֵּל and הַכְּבִיר as governing the same Accusative, viz. אֶרֶץ זבלון וארצה נפתלי, and the R. V. accordingly adds the pronoun 'it' after the second verb; but the parallelism is improved, if we place the Ethnāh at the word נַפְתָּלִי, and make הַכְּבִיר directly govern the words which follow.

בְּדֶרֶךְ הַיָּם עֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן וְגִלְיָל הַגּוֹיִם, 'the Way of the Sea, the region beyond Jordan, Galilee (or the district) of the nations'. In these six words, which fall into three groups of two, have we one locality indicated or three? The first and second are ambiguous, the third 'Galilee of the nations' is definite. Dr Skinner has pointed out² that 'in the time of the Crusades *Via Maris* was the name of the road leading from Acre to Damascus': and accordingly בְּדֶרֶךְ הַיָּם might be a reference to Galilee. But it is obvious that Galilee could only be described as 'on the other side of the Jordan' by one living on the *east* of the Jordan, and as it is difficult to assume a trans-Jordanic standpoint for the writer of this passage, it is better to understand *three* localities to be indicated.

Standing then, as we may well suppose, in Jerusalem, the prophet turns first to the district on his left hand along the coast of the Mediterranean, theoretically belonging to Israel, but during the greater part of the Old Testament history in the possession of aliens; next to the district on his right hand, beyond the Jordan, Bashan and Gilead, for the possession of which Israel had had so many a hard fight; then he looks straight northward to the furthest northern province of Israel proper, Galilee of the nations.

¹ It would however be possible to adopt a different division of the words, so as to read for *Zebulun* and *Naphtali* the corresponding adjectival forms, viz. אֶרֶץ הַזְּבֻלֹנִי וְאֶרֶץ הַנַּפְתָּלִי; but there is no instance elsewhere of a gentilic adjective formed from נַפְתָּלִי.

² *Commentary on Isaiah* vol. i p. 73.

In verse 3 (Heb. *v.* 2) there is a textual difficulty. As the text stands the verse reads, 'Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast not increased the joy'. The negative, which jars on all who hear the first lesson for Christmas morning, is in the Masoretic tradition got rid of by substituting לָ for לֹא, which the R. V. translates, 'Thou hast increased their joy'. But the emphasis which the pronoun thus read gains from its position at the head of the clause is unsuitable. It is as though we should read, 'Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased *their* joy'. We may follow therefore the correction made independently by the late Prof. Selwyn and others, reading הַגִּיל 'the exultation' for לֹא הַגִּיל 'the nation, not'. We thus improve both parallelism and rhythm.

הַרְבִּיתָ הַגִּיל הַנְּדִלְתָּ הַשְּׂמֵחָה
 שְׂמֵחוּ לְסִנְיָהּ בְּשִׂמְחַת בְּקָצִיר
 בְּאִשֶּׁר יִגִּילוּ בְּחֻלְקָם שָׁלֵל

Verse 4 (Heb. *v.* 3) contains no special difficulty.

In verse 5 we have a ἀπαξ λεγόμενον קִאֲוֹן. This word is fairly frequent in Aramaic, occurring in Syriac in the form ܩܐܘܢܐ, and in the Targums in the form קִאֲוֹנָא. Another word from the same root ܩܐܘܢܐ, טסנא, טסנא, טסנא, occurs more commonly both in Syriac and in the Targums in the sense of 'shoe'; but we are not justified in arguing from this that ܩܐܘܢܐ in Aramaic has a special sense. In Syriac it is used apparently of the ordinary foot covering of both men and women; but since in *Joshua Stylites* p. 73 l. 8 it is coupled with ܩܐܘܢܐ sole, we may perhaps argue that it denoted something of the nature of a *shoe* rather than a mere sole or sandal.

The following word ܩܐܘܢܐ, 'one wearing shoes,' is also abundantly justified by Aramaic usage.

The next word ܩܐܘܢܐ is rendered by the R. V., not very correctly, 'in the tumult'. Strictly speaking, the word ܩܐܘܢܐ denotes *quaking*, being used of an earthquake in 1 Kings xix 11, Amos i 1, &c. In some passages, however, e.g. Jerem. x 22, xlvii 3, Ezek. iii 12, 13, Ezek. xxxvii 7, it denotes *noise*, such as the rattling of chariot wheels. There is no proof that it ever meant 'tumult'; and it must accordingly be understood here as used adverbially to qualify ܩܐܘܢܐ, meaning 'noisily' or 'heavily'. This translation is also more in accordance with the vowel points. The rendering of the R. V. would require ܩܐܘܢܐ to be regarded as in the construct state.

The next word calling for comment is ܩܐܘܢܐ, R. V. 'rolled'. This conjugation of the root ܩܐܘܢܐ is found here only; though the corresponding reflexive conjugation occurs in 2 Sam. xx 12 of Amasa weltering

in blood. The only objection to it is that it seems to imply a garment *caked together* with blood, whereas the preceding words would imply a living, heavily trampling warrior. It is not improbable therefore that we should read *קִטְמָה*, 'defiled'; the root *טמל* being used of blood-stains in Isa. lix 3, lxiii 3, Lam. iv 14.

In verse 6 (Heb. 5) the force of the Perfects has been already discussed. The word translated 'government' occurs only here and in the following verse. The pointing seems to connect it with *שרה*; but as this root seems to have the meaning of *fighting* or *contending*, and the sense required here is obviously that of 'rule' or 'principality', the word should probably be connected with *שרר* and be pointed *שָׁרָה*, on the analogy of *שָׁרָה* from *חתה*. The phrase 'the principality has come upon his back' is contrasted with 'the rod of his back' (R. V. 'the staff of his shoulder'); cf. verse 4.

The latter part of verse 6 gives us a description of the deliverer: 'and he (*sc.* *הַיְהוָה*, according to the idiom explained by Prof. Driver on 1 Sam. xvi 4) has called his name', *Anglice* 'and there has been given to him the name'.

The words which immediately follow have been the cause of much controversy. The *Targum* makes the words *פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גְּבוּרַת אָבִי עַד* the Nominative to the verb *יִקְרָא*, translating, 'and his name is called from the presence of Him who giveth wondrous counsel, even the mighty God who endureth for ever, the Anointed One in whose days peace will be multiplied upon us'. Luzzatto (quoted by Cheyne) translates 'The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, decrees wondrous things'.

It is no exaggeration to say that both these renderings are counsels of despair. They are both absolutely opposed to all that we know of Hebrew idiom. There remains therefore no other alternative than with the English Version to regard the eight words as forming the name of the child. The punctuation of the A. V., made familiar to us by Handel's great chorus, divides these eight words into five titles; but modern commentators are agreed on dividing them into four, each consisting of two words. The first pair *פְּלֵא יוֹעֵץ* (according to the idiom *פְּלֵא אֵל* Gen. xvi 12) will mean 'a marvel of a counsellor', or rather, 'designer', i. e. one who belongs to the class *יוֹעֵץ* and is distinguished from other members of the class as being *פְּלֵא*. We may translate 'Marvellous Designer'.

The second pair of words is of the utmost interest, being commonly translated 'mighty God'. To this translation in and by itself no objection can be made. That *אֵל* may be translated 'God', that *גְּבוּרַת* means 'mighty' and is actually used as an epithet of God (e.g. Ps. xxiv 8), cannot be disputed. But since to Hebrew ears a name implies the

essential characteristic of the person to whom it is given, and the recipient of the name **אֵל גִּבּוֹר** is one *that is born*, it is necessary that we should most carefully examine the meaning of this phrase. Did a Hebrew prophet actually mean, what none even of our Lord's Apostles explicitly affirmed till a week after the Resurrection, that one who was *born* could be 'mighty God'?

It is a noteworthy fact that the New Testament contains no reference to this verse, which, if the ordinary translation be correct, is the most remarkable of all Messianic prophecies. This however may be due to the fact that the LXX entirely obscures its meaning.

Considering then that, with the very doubtful exception of Ps. xlv 7, the ascription of Divinity to the Messiah is unparalleled in the Old Testament, we naturally enquire whether **אֵל גִּבּוֹר** *must* mean 'mighty God'.

Now in Ezekiel xxxii 21 we find the phrase **אֵלֵי גִבּוֹרִים**, which the R.V. translates 'the strong among the mighty'. **אֵלִים** also occurs Job xli 17 (R.V. 'the mighty'), 1 Chron. xxix 21 (R.V. 'rams'). In all these passages the MSS vary between **אֵל** and **אֵיל**, as though the word were derived from **אֵיל**. **אֵלִים** occurs also 2 Chron. xxix 22, and **אֵלֵיהֶם** Ezek. xxxi 14¹.

But if **אֵלֵי גִבּוֹרִים** can be used of *men*, there is no reason why **אֵל גִּבּוֹר** should not also be used of a man. In fact the latter phrase is nothing but the singular of the former, just as **בֶּן־נָבִיא** (Amos vii 14) is the singular of **בְּנֵי נְבִיאִים**. **אֵל** is in the construct state before **גִּבּוֹר**, and means literally 'a mighty one of a hero', i.e. 'mighty hero'. By this translation there is a distinct gain in the symmetry of the grammar, the first noun in each of the four pairs being in the construct state.

The third pair **אָבִי עֵר** is commonly translated 'Father of eternity'; but it is hardly necessary to state that the idea of *eternity* is one which scarcely presented itself to a Hebrew. **עֵר** is in fact a synonym of **עוֹלָם** (as may be seen from such passages as Job xx 4, Ps. cxxxii 12) and the phrase denotes 'father in perpetuity'; 'father' being a recognized expression in Hebrew for 'mentor' or 'guide'; as, for example, in Gen. xlv 8, where Joseph speaks of himself as being a 'father' to Pharaoh, and Judges xvii 10, where Micah bids the young Levite become his 'father'.

In verse 7 there is some uncertainty about the reading of the first word from the fact that the *mem* of **לְסִרְבָּה** is written as a final letter; so that it is possible that we should read **רַבְּבָה הַסִּרְבָּה**, the **לַם** being a dittography of the last two radicals of **שְׁלוֹם**. The final **ם** may however be easily

¹ An instance of the omission of a yodh is probably found in Job xvi 21, where for **וַיִּזְכֹּר** the parallelism and sense require **וַיִּזְכֹּר**.

accounted for on the supposition that in the transliteration of this passage from the old character to the square the scribe's eye wandered from the *למ לטובה* to the *לם* of *שלום*. The LXX favours the former alternative, but in any case the sense is not materially affected.

Additional Note B.

The date adopted in the foregoing article for the call of Isaiah assumes the correctness of the identification of Uzziah (Azariah) with the *Asriau* of Tiglath Pileser's annals. Winckler's attempt to identify the *Ya-u-di* of the Assyrian inscriptions with the *יאדי* of the Sinjirli inscription cannot be pronounced successful (see McCurdy *History, Prophecy, and the Monuments* vol. i pp. 413 ff.).

Unnecessary difficulty has been caused by Tiglath Pileser's statement that 'nineteen districts belonging to Hamath' had allied themselves with Azriau, king of Yaudi'. It certainly need not be inferred from this statement that Judah was the foremost military power in Syria. A simple explanation of the alliance between Hamath and Judah may be found in the previous relation of the Syrian states, particularly Judah and Israel, to one another. That the kings of Judah acknowledged the kings of Israel as their suzerains, at all events from the time of Omri, is implied by several passages in the Old Testament. Thus, for example, Jehoshaphat is summoned by Ahab to join him against the Aramaeans (1 Kings xxii); a little later he is compelled by Ahab's son Jehoram to take part in a campaign against Moab (2 Kings iii); the suicidal folly of Amaziah (2 Kings xiv 8-14) is scarcely explicable except on the supposition that after his subjugation of Moab he now imagined himself strong enough to regain independence.

It must be remembered that neither Assyrian, Aramaean, nor Israelite conquerors seem to have had any idea of unifying an empire. Their primary purpose in conquest was to obtain tribute in the shape of money and men from the conquered provinces. So long as this was punctually paid they seem to have interfered but little, if at all, with the government of the tributary states; and there seems to have been no objection to a vassal king's recouping himself for the tribute which he paid by himself levying tribute on some more remote province.

Thus, for example, Omri was suzerain of Moab while he himself was still subject to Damascus (1 Kings xx 34); and similar relations between the three kingdoms continued in the reign of Ahab. There is no evidence that Edom had ever been subject to North Israel: in the Moabite war Jehoram summons only Jehoshaphat (2 Kings iii 7), but a little later (verse 9) we find the king of Edom associated with the kings of Israel and Judah; and the previous and subsequent history of Edom makes it probable that it was as Jehoshaphat's vassal that the

king of Edom took part in the campaign (cf. 2 Kings viii 20). Accordingly, Amaziah's subjugation of Edom (2 Kings xiv 7) and Uzziah's campaign against the Philistines (2 Chron. xxvi 6) are not incompatible with their tributary position.

If it be granted that Uzziah, like his predecessors on the throne of Judah, was required to pay tribute to the king of Israel, the whole political position is made clear. Amaziah's restless desire for independence had nearly ruined his kingdom; and that the same restlessness continued in his descendants is sufficiently clear from the fact that the main object of the Syro-Ephraimitic campaign was to remove from the throne of Judah the representative of the Davidic dynasty. It is by no means impossible that this restlessness had already produced a *casus belli*; and that it is to this that Isaiah referred when he spoke of the house of David as 'wearying men' (Isa. vii 13), and gave his eldest boy the name *Shear-jashub*. The assertion 'A remnant will return' was undoubtedly originally not a promise, but a threat, and not improbably meant that a mere remnant would return from the war which the restless folly of the house of David was provoking. It is not impossible, though the passage is too obscure to be used as the basis of an argument, that Hosea in his denunciation of the princes of Judah in ch. v 10 refers to some *casus belli* produced by Judah.

It must be remembered that in the days of Jeroboam II the borders of the kingdom of Israel had been greatly enlarged. When its northern limit reached 'the entering in of Hamath', the various states of Coele-Syria would naturally begin to feel anxiety on their own account, and to think that the frontier needed rectification. In such a state of things they would readily seek an ally in the discontented vassal of the power which they considered to be a menace to their safety; and thus some sort of compact between Judah and Hamath is intrinsically probable. The fact that the alliance was directed not against Assyria but against Israel would be of small moment to the king of Assyria. There is no reason to suppose that Tiglath Pileser really believed in any danger from Judah. Any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, and it was sufficient for his purpose that states over which he claimed suzerainty had given him an excuse for plunder by making an alliance with a foreign state.

R. H. KENNETT.

THE MODERN ROMAN CANON AND THE BOOK OF ESDRAS A.

IN a series of letters published in the *Academy* some twenty years ago, and subsequently in articles in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, I claim to have definitely proved that the text of the Canonical Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah contained in the extant Greek Bibles is not a Septuagint text at all, and ought to have no place in any edition of the Greek Bible professing to represent the Septuagint.

On the contrary, the text represents very faithfully one of the Greek translations from the Hebrew made in the second century A. D. It has no value, therefore, for the *independent* criticism of the Masoretic edition of the Bible, and is merely useful as shewing the state of the text of the three books as they stood in that edition in the second century A. D., when, according to the most competent authorities its archetype was compiled and edited.

This conclusion seems to me to be of the first importance, for it sweeps away all the textual criticism of the three books in question based upon the erroneous postulate that the Masoretic text in them is singularly free from corruption *because* it is so continuously supported by the Septuagint. Inasmuch as profitable criticism of the Old Testament should begin with its latest books, it is supremely important that such a mistake should not be perpetuated by the authorities responsible for the new Cambridge Bible.

The problem to be solved is, however, a bilateral one. It does not mean merely that the texts thus referred to (i.e. the canonical Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah) are in no sense Septuagint texts, but it means the rehabilitation in that character of another text, namely *Ἑσδρας Α* in the Greek Uncials, which until lately has received very scant courtesy among the critics, especially in Germany, who have persistently misapprehended its true character.

It has been treated even worse by the theologians, both by those of the Roman Church, which has always stood by the Septuagint Canon, and by the Reformers whose most potent and far-reaching innovation, theologically speaking, was probably the substitution of the Hebrew or Masoretic Canon of the Bible for that which the Christian world both east and west had clung to for fifteen centuries.

Singularly enough, however, the champions both of the longer and of the shorter Canon have agreed in modern times to treat with despite a document (namely "Εσδρας Α) the true history of which has been misapprehended, and its supreme value overlooked. The fact is peculiarly interesting and important in regard to the Roman position in the matter, and I propose in the following pages to examine how it has come about that a Church with whom the theory of continuous tradition is so dominant should have in fact departed so completely from its own early tradition in regard to this book, and to shew that this departure has been entirely due to a mistake, a very pardonable mistake, and in no sense to prejudice or predetermination.

In order to shew this I must shortly trace the history of the Canon of the Old Testament in the Roman Church. The last authoritative pronouncement on the subject is contained in chapter 2 of the Decree of the Vatican Council, dated April 24, 1870, entitled *Constitutio dogmatica de fide catholica*. In this pronouncement it is affirmed that the doctrine of Supernatural Revelation, according to the faith of the Universal Church as declared at the Council of Trent, consists in written books and in the traditions preserved by the Church. In regard to the former the decisions of Trent are accepted and confirmed in the following sentence of the decree:—

Qui quidem veteris et novi testamenti libri integri cum omnibus suis partibus, prout in eiusdem concilii decreto recensentur, et in veteri vulgata latina editione habentur, pro sacris et canonicis suscipiendi sunt.

The Vatican Council, therefore, in the matter of the Canon merely reiterates and reaffirms, as was in fact alone necessary, the conclusions pronounced by that of Trent. It gives no list of sacred books, and accepts in terms the finding on the subject of the Tridentine fathers.

Let us now turn to the Council of Trent.

On February 8, 1546, a General Congregation of that Council was held, and it was proposed to issue a decree in regard to the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and as to any improvement that might be made in their teaching or interpretation. The Council was divided into three sections, and the second section, which was presided over by Cardinal Marcello Cervini, afterwards Pope Marcellus II, was especially entrusted with an examination of the question, and with the sifting of the evidence from the eighty-fifth of the Apostolical Canons down to the decrees of the Council of Florence. The discussion was prolonged and interesting, and raised many critical points. Various suggestions about the distinction between canonical and deuterocanonical books and about the authority of particular books were made, but the majority were of opinion that the sacred books should be received simply and without discrimination as they had been at other councils, and especially at the Council of Florence. At length the Cardinal reported the results of the discussion to another meeting of the General Congregation, when, in the words of the report preserved by the secretaries,

omnes convenere ut receptio librorum sacrorum fieret simpliciter sicut factum fuit in concilio Florentino . . . De ipsorum autem librorum discrimine, etsi plures rem utilem, minus tamen necessariam iudicarent ; maioris nihilo minus partis sententia praevaluit ut quaestio huiusmodi omitteretur, relinquereturque sicut nobis a sanctis patribus relicta fuit. —Theiner I, 52.

In this quite logical and most sensible pronouncement the Church of Rome, putting aside all considerations and arguments which had been urged to the contrary, decided to stand on its own ancient tradition, and in particular upon the pronouncement made on this subject at the Council of Florence. Therefore by a decree issued on April 8, 1546, at the fourth session of the Council, under the heading 'Decretum de Canonicis Scripturis', it was determined *inter alia* as follows :—

Sacrorum vero librorum indicem huic decreto adscribendum censuit, ne cui dubitatio suboriri possit, quinam sint qui ab ipsa synodo suscipiuntur. Sunt vero infra scripti. Testamenti veteris : quinque Moysis, id est : Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium ; Iosuae, Iudicum, Ruth, quatuor Regum, duo Paralipomenon, *Esdrae primus et*

secundus, qui dicitur Nehemias, Tobias, Iudith, Esther, Iob, Psalterium Davidicum centum quinquaginta psalmodum, Parabola, Ecclesiastes, Canticum Canticorum, Sapientia, Ecclesiasticus, Isaias, Ieremias cum Baruch, Ezechiel, Daniel, duodecim prophetae minores, id est: Osea, Ioel, Amos, Abdias, Ionas, Michaeas, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonias, Aggaeus, Zacharias, Malachias, duo Macchabaeorum primus et secundus Testamenti novi.

Then follows a list of the books of the New Testament, which is again followed by certain words defining the actual text to be appealed to, and which are very important for our purpose.

It is in fact provided that the text alone authorized as the *ultima lex* of all appeals is the Vulgate. The following are the actual words used in the 'Decretum de editione et usu sacrorum librorum':—

Insuper eadem sacrosancta synodus considerans non parum utilitatis accedere posse ecclesiae Dei, si ex omnibus latinis editionibus, quae circumferuntur, sacrorum librorum, quatenam pro authentica habenda sit, innotescat: statuit et declarat, ut haec ipsa vetus et vulgata editio quae longo tot saeculorum usu in ipsa ecclesia probata est, in publicis lectionibus, disputationibus, praedicationibus et expositionibus pro authentica habeatur, et ut nemo illam reiicere quovis praetextu audeat vel praesumat.

It cannot fail to be noticed that in these pronouncements there is a palpable contradiction. If the books enumerated are alone to be deemed canonical, it seems difficult to understand how the Vulgate edition of the Bible as then received was to be treated as the conclusive authority in all disputes and controversies, since it contained, in very many if not in most existing copies, at least two additional works which were treated in them as of equal and co-ordinate authority with the remaining books, namely those which in the Latin Bibles were called Esdras III (that is *Esdrae A*) and Esdras IV; while some copies of the Vulgate also contained a third book not above enumerated, namely, the Prayer of Manasses, as well as the so-called Third book of Maccabees.

This contradiction between the pronouncement of the Council and the contents of the Vulgate texts which were and had long been current, was apparently ignored by the fathers at Trent. It led, however, to a considerable change in the editions of the Vulgate subsequently printed, by which their contents were in a measure equated with the conciliar list of recognized books. As

is well known, in the famous and authoritative edition of the Vulgate issued by Pope Sixtus V in 1590, the two books Esdras III and IV, together with the so-called Prayer of Manasses, were omitted entirely. This was justified in the preface in the following sentence:—

Nos autem ut haec Vetus editio, quae nunc prodit nostro excusa prelo, eiusdem Synodi [*i.e. Trent*] praescripto modis omnibus responderet non solum veteres, et ab Ecclesia receptos loquendi modos conservavimus, sed etiam apocrypha reiecit, authentica retinimus. Nam tertium et quartum Esdrae libros inscriptos, et tertium Macchabaeorum, quos Synodus inter Canonicos non annumerat, assentientibus etiam in hoc praedictis Cardinalibus Congregationis super Typographia Vaticana deputatae, ab hac editione prorsus explosimus. Orationem etiam Manassae, quae neque in Hebraeo, neque in Graeco textu est, neque in antiquioribus Manuscriptis Latinis exemplaribus reperitur, sed in impressis tantum post Librum secundum Paralipomenon affixa est, tanquam insutam, adiectam et in textu sacrorum librorum locum non habentem repudiavimus.

In the subsequent and corrected and still more authoritative edition of Clement VIII, published three years later, and in all subsequent editions of the Roman Vulgate the three books just mentioned were reinstated, but instead of being placed in the old position they occupied in the mediaeval Latin Bibles, they were remitted to an appendix. This again was justified in the preface in the following words:—

Porro in hac editione nihil non canonicum, nihil adscititium, nihil extraneum apponere visum est: atque ea causa fuit, cur libri tertius et quartus Esdrae inscripti, quos inter canonicos libros sacra Tridentina Synodus non annumeravit, ipsa etiam Manassae regis Oratio, quae neque hebraice, neque graece quidem exstat, neque in manuscriptis antiquioribus invenitur, neque pars est ullius canonici libri, extra canonicae scripturae seriem posita sunt.

The appendix to which the three books were remitted is headed—

Oratio Manassae, necnon libri duo, qui sub Libri Tertii et Quarti Esdrae nomine circumferuntur, hoc in loco, extra scilicet seriem canonicorum librorum quos sancta Tridentina Synodus suscepit et pro canonicis suscipiendos decrevit, sepositi sunt ne prorsus interirent, quippe qui a nonnullis sanctis Patribus interdum citantur et in aliquibus Bibliis latinis tam manuscriptis quam impressis reperiuntur.

It will be noted that in Clement VIII's edition of the Vulgate, which is the one now authorized, not a word is said of the Third book of Maccabees, which had a place in some of the old copies of the Vulgate.

The removal of the three books above mentioned from the text of the Bible, and the planting of them in a kind of suspense account in an Appendix, while it made the text of the canonical books in the rest of the Bible consistent with the enumeration in the decree of the Tridentine Council, was clearly a tampering with the text of the Vulgate as previously received, though this had been declared by the same Council to be the official and authentic text. Let us, however, turn to the Council of Florence, which was held in 1439, and which the Fathers at Trent professed to follow and to be bound by.

In the Bull published on February 4, 1441, by Eugenius IV affirming the decision of the Florentine Council in regard to the pronouncement which was made in view of the reunion with the Church of Rome of the Jacobites of Egypt, we have an enumeration of the books then recognized as canonical by the Western Church. This list was followed implicitly by the Council of Trent. There are variations, however, of phraseology, and I think it better as the question is one involving polemical issues to transcribe it as it stands in the Bull. The important part for our purpose runs as follows:—

Unum atque eundem Deum veteris et novi testamenti, hoc est Legis et Prophetarum atque Evangelii profitetur auctorem; quoniam, eodem Spiritu Sancto inspirante, utriusque testamenti Sancti locuti sunt, quorum libros suscipit et veneratur, qui titulis sequentibus continentur: Quinque Moysis, id est Genesi, Exodo, Levitico, Numeris, Deuteronomio; Iosue, Iudicum, Ruth; Quatuor Regum; Duobus Paralipomenon: *Esdra, Nehemia*, Tobia, Iudith, Hester, Iob, Psalmis David, Parabolis, Ecclesiaste, Canticis Cantorum, Sapientia, Ecclesiastico, Isaia, Ieremia, Baruch, Ezechiele, Daniele; Duodecim Prophetis minoribus, id est Osee, Ioele, Amos, Abdia, Iona, Michea, Nahum, Habacuc, Sophonia, Aggeo, Zacharia, Malachia; Duobus Maccabaeorum.—*Bullarium Rom. Romae 1638, I p. 273*¹.

Then follows a list of the New Testament books.

It will be seen that this enumeration is in substance precisely

¹ In this extract from the Bull, as in the corresponding one from the Tridentine pronouncement, the italics are mine.

that of the Council of Trent, and that here, as at the subsequent Councils of Trent and the Vatican, no distinction whatever is made between proto-canonical and deutero-canonical, canonical and apocryphal, &c., but all the books enumerated were treated as equally canonical. It will also be noted that no mention is here made of the third and fourth books of Esdras, notwithstanding that virtually every copy of the Latin Bible then in use contained them.

In regard to the decision of the Council of Florence as pronounced by the Pope in his Decretal, we cannot appeal for justification to the minutes of the discussion upon its contents as we can at Trent, since they are not extant, and we must turn elsewhere to find some previous official pronouncement in the same behalf, for we can hardly doubt that on such an occasion the definition of the Biblical Canon would be made with especial care and with consideration for precedent. For such precedent we have to go back a long way. This is to be accounted for by the fact that questions as to the Canon had not disturbed men's minds in the Middle Ages, and there had not, therefore, been any necessity or occasion for an official pronouncement on the subject. We have to go back, in fact, to the famous African Code, which is headed 'The Canons of the 217 blessed fathers who assembled at Carthage', commonly called 'The Code of Canons of the African Church', and which was passed and authorized in the year 419 A.D. Johnson, in his *Clergyman's vade mecum*, London, second edition, 1714, part II, has given an excellent account of them, which has not been improved since. He says:—'Councils were nowhere more frequently called in the Primitive Times than in Africa. In the year 418-419 all Canons formerly made in sixteen Councils held at Carthage, one at Milevis, and one at Hippo, that were approved of were read, and received a new sanction from a great number of bishops then met in Synod at Carthage. This collection is the Code of the African Church, which was always in greatest repute in all churches next after the Code of the Universal Church. This Code was of very great authority in the old English Churches, for many of the exceptions of Egbert were transcribed from it. And though the Code of the Universal Church ends with the Canons of Chalcedon, yet these African Canons are inserted into the Ancient Code both of the Eastern and Western Churches.'

At the Council of Carthage held in 419 the Pope was represented by Faustinus, bishop of Potentia in the Italian province of Picenum, as legate. The Canon there enacted, and headed 'De Scripturis Canonicis' (Labbe iv 430), was a reiteration and reaffirmation of those enacted *inter alia* at the Councils of Hippo in 393 and of Carthage in 397.

The 36th Canon of the Council of Hippo declares that besides the canonical Scriptures nothing is to be read in the Church under the name of Divine Scriptures. It then enumerates what the Canonical Scriptures are, and, so far as I know, there is no conciliar pronouncement on the subject between these African Synods and the Council of Florence. Their enumeration of the Old Testament books is as follows:—

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numeri, Deuteronomium, Iesu Nave, Iudicum, Ruth, Regnorum libri quatuor, Paralipomenon libri duo, Iob, Psalterium Davidicum, Salomonis libri quinque, Duodecim libri Prophetarum, Esaias, Ieremias, Daniel, Ezechiel, Tobias, Iudith, Hester, *Hesdrae libri duo*¹, Machabaeorum libri duo.

The iteration of this Canon by the African Councils was probably due, as Father Loisy has suggested, to the fear, entertained by many, of the revolutionary ideas of Jerome. Nothing could well be more authoritative, however, and more precise than the position that the list of books above quoted was deemed by these three very important Synods to be the Catholic usage in the Western Church in regard to the contents of the Canon of the Old Testament at the end of the fourth century.

On comparing the list of books authorized as Canonical by the African Synods with those of the Councils of Florence and Trent, there is a superficial and misleading equation in regard to the books of Esdras which we are discussing, that accounts for what was really a mistake made by the latter councils.

In the Canon last quoted we have the phrase *Hesdrae libri duo*. In the Decree of the Council of Florence we have *Esdra, Nehemia*. In that of Trent we have *Esdrae primus et secundus qui dicitur Nehemias*.

The fact is that the phrase *Hesdrae libri duo* in the decree of the earlier Councils does not mean the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra and Nehemiah in the Septuagint and in the

¹ These italics are my own.

early Latin prae-Hieronymian translation of the Bible which followed the Septuagint, and was alone recognized as canonical in the Latin Church at the end of the fourth century, formed a single book, which in the early Greek MSS was entitled *Ἑσδρας Β*, and which in the early Latin version was entitled *Esdras II*.

It was Jerome who altered the nomenclature of these books as he altered many other things (and, as some of us think, not too wisely). It was he who, having accepted the Jewish Canon and tradition, also accepted the Jewish division of the book hitherto known to the Greeks as *Ἑσδρας Β*, which in the old Latin Bibles was called *Esdras II*, and gave the two sections of it the new titles of *Esdras I* and *Esdras II*, equivalent to our *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*; and from him the titles passed into the revised Vulgate, of which he was the author, and eventually became dominant everywhere, and was thus dominant when the Council of Florence sat. It was he who poured scorn on two other books of *Ezra* contained in the earlier Latin Bibles, and refused to have anything to do with them, or to translate them, and gave them an entirely inferior status by numbering them *Esdras III* and *IV*, names by which they have since been styled in the Vulgate; and it was his violent and depreciatory language about them which made many doubt their value and authority.

When the fathers at Florence discussed and decided upon their list of authorized and canonical books, finding, no doubt, that the African Councils had only recognized two books of *Esdras*, they jumped to the conclusion that these two books must be those called *Esdras I* and *Esdras II* in their Bibles, namely, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*; which in fact they were not. Hence their mistake, a great but a natural mistake, which is perpetuated in the Roman Canon.

The two books of *Esdras* recognized by the African Councils, and by all the Fathers who escaped the influence of Jerome, were the books labelled *Ἑσδρας Α* and *Ἑσδρας Β* in the Greek Bibles, that is to say, the first book of *Esdras*, which was remitted to the Apocrypha by the Reformers, and the joint work *Ezra-Nehemiah*. This evidence will not be doubted by any one who will examine the early Greek Bibles, and the Canonical lists of the Fathers who were uninfluenced by Jerome.

It is completely recognized by Roman Catholic theologians of the first rank. Thus Calmet, who wrote a special treatise on Esdras A, says: 'When the Fathers and the Councils of the earlier centuries declared the two books of Esdras to be canonical, they meant, following the current Bibles that First Esdras and Nehemiah formed only one book, while they styled First Esdras the work which is called third in our Bibles' (Calmet *Comm.* iii 250 'Dissert. sur le III livre d'Esdras'). Father Loisy, the most distinguished scholar among the recent writers on the Canon in France, similarly says: 'The two books of Esdras contained in them (i. e. in early copies of the Latin Bible) are not Esdras and Nehemiah; but as in the Greek Bible, the first book of Esdras is that we now call the third, which has been ejected from the Canon; the second comprised Esdras and Nehemiah' (*Histoire du Canon* 92).

It is quite clear, therefore, that the Council of Florence, afterwards followed by that of Trent, gave a decision about the Canon which is inconsistent and contrary to the decisions of the early Councils and the early Fathers of the Latin Church on the same subject, and thus broke the continuity of that Church's teaching on a most important point, namely the contents of the book which it makes the ultimate rule of faith. Thus, again, one book, namely the Esdras A of the Greek Uncials, recognized as canonical by all the early Church, was entirely evicted from Sixtus V's Bible, and remitted to the ignominious position of a suspense account in that of Clement VIII, and is so treated in all authorized Roman Catholic Bibles.

The omission of Esdras A from the modern Roman Canon of the Bible does not stand quite alone. In the same suspense account to which it is now remitted in the Vulgate we also find the Prayer of Manasses. For this treatment there is ample justification if we are to follow the decrees of Latin Councils; but the reason for it given by Clement VIII is incorrect.

The Prayer of Manasses is a canticle which, according to the preface to Clement VIII's Bible, does not occur in the Hebrew Bibles, nor yet in the Greek Bibles. This is not strictly accurate, as Walton long ago shewed by printing a copy of it from a Greek MS. The statement in the preface to Clement VIII's

Bible is not therefore correct. The Prayer occurs in fact in the third volume of the *Codex Alexandrinus* as an appendix to the Psalter, and with the Psalms, as Dr Swete says, it was transferred to that MS from a liturgical Psalter (*The Old Testament in Greek* II viii). It also occurs in the famous purple psalter at Zurich known as T (Turicense) which is of the seventh century and of western origin. It also occurs in the Ethiopic version of the Psalms edited by J. Ludolf. And it is quoted at length in the Apostolical Constitutions; so it has very respectable age and authority.

There is, however, no direct evidence of its having received any conciliar authority, as there is none that it occurred in early Bible texts or in early Canonical lists, and its exclusion from the Canon by the Sixtine and Clementine editors of the Bible is therefore quite defensible, if we are to follow the decisions of Councils as decisive.

There still remains a third book, namely that known as Esdras IV in the Vulgate, which was also excluded from the Bible of Sixtus and remitted to an appendix in that of Clement. This work does not occur in any Greek Bible. It occurs in Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, an Armenian and two Arabic translations; it is found in several important Vulgate MSS, and is quoted in the Apostolical Constitutions; but inasmuch as it is excluded from the early lists of canonical books, and especially from those with conciliar authority, it has with plausibility been remitted to the same appendix as the Prayer of Manasseh in the modern authorized Latin Bibles.

Both these books stand on entirely different ground therefore from what we have described as Esdras A, whose undoubted and rightful presence in the Western Canon before the unfortunate mistake made by the Council of Florence cannot be gainsaid. Jerome, no doubt, coupled it with the apocalyptic book Esdras IV, with which it has nothing in common either in contents or authority, and poured scorn on them both. His action in this matter is an excellent instance of his hasty judgement in biblical matters, and of the prejudice that can be created and sustained against a genuine work by the tempestuous language of a masterful scholar.

It seems to me plain that it was a misfortune as well as

a mistake which excluded Esdras A from the modern Roman Canon, and that its reinstatement there would be a distinct gain to the cause of truth, and it would sustain the consistency of the Latin Church in its treatment of its Bible.

Perhaps I may be permitted in another paper to discuss the Anglican Canon as affected by similar issues.

HENRY H. HOWORTH.