

ARTICLE V.

THE UNITY OF ISAIAH.

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IF I venture to return to my studies of Isaiah,¹ it is because, amid the vast number of details into which the "scientific" criticism leads us, the reader may readily lose himself. This is one of the reasons why that criticism has been so widely accepted. It expresses the sublimest confidence in the truth of its conclusions. But the formulæ of the criticism itself are as complicated as a problem of the higher mathematics. And in this impatient age it saves a world of trouble to accept the conclusions of the critics, and leave the process of thinking entirely in their hands. On the other hand, those who doubt on the matter, and are unable to enter into the details, are overwhelmed by the confident air which all critics of the German school, whether defeated or victorious, invariably assume. Like the Germans during the War, they are always victors in every battle, and when compelled to retire, do so for "strategic" reasons.

One point which may be restated in this paper is the question of the right of the critic to call his criticism "scientific." The commentary on Isaiah in the "Cambridge Bible for Schools" may be consulted as putting the results in a form suited to inquirers. *Move Germano*, there are many assertions, but few arguments. Almost invariably this or that conclusion is introduced by such words as "probably," "possibly," "might

¹ Art. "The Unity of Isaiah," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, vol. lxxi. pp. 560-591 (Oct. 1915).

be," "appears to have," "must have had," "must have been," "may be assumed to have been," etc.¹ Now this is in itself a proof that the criticism so confidently described as "scientific" has no claim to be described as such. The "exact sciences" — and what is not exact is not, strictly speaking, a "science" at all — know nothing about "probabilities" of any kind. The conclusions are always tested by comparison with observation, and not till then are they regarded as established. Errors, of course, sometimes creep in, because some of the conclusions are not absolute, but are only approximate, and are usually known to be such, and are used in investigations as the nearest approach to demonstrated fact which has yet been made, and near enough for most practical purposes. Observations more minute and more careful will, it is felt, be made with improved instruments and improved conditions, and their results brought still nearer to the actual truth. Then, and not till then, all truly scientific minds will accept them. This, as students of science are well aware, has constantly happened. But the "discoveries" of the Germanizing critics from Eichhorn downwards are *not* approximations, or even *attempts* at approximations, but consist of a series of quite new attempts to solve the problem approached. Each school of critics abandons all, or nearly all, of the theories of its predecessor, and starts off afresh on new lines of its own. This is not "scientific criticism." It is simply guesswork. And hitherto all the guesses have been bad ones.²

¹ See Introduction to *Isalah*, Cambridge Bible for Schools, pp. lxxviii, lxxv.

² An excellent textbook on Natural Science, entitled *The Realm of Nature*, by Hugh R. Mill, D.Sc., LL.D., tells us that "after observing a considerable number of facts the investigator imagines a probable cause or explanation, and this explanation is termed an *hypothesis*." Then he "reasons deductively from the assumed ex-

It will be necessary, for the proper understanding of this paper, that the reader should once more be told that the Book of Isaiah is, by modern Germanizing critics, divided into four portions: (A) the actual prophecies of Isaiah himself; (B) the work of eight or nine other unknown prophets of various dates, some of them consisting of mere scraps of a few lines, some of them being definite prophecies going into considerable detail; (C) the historical parts of the prophet's message; and (D) what was once known as "the second Isaiah," namely, the last portion of the book, consisting of chapters xl.-lxvi. "A" (used to designate Isaiah's "genuine work") consists of all the parts of chap. i.-xxxv. which are not assigned to other authors. "B" consists of the parts of chaps. i.-xxxv. which are asserted *not* to be by Isaiah. "C" consists of chaps. xxxvi.-xxxix. "D" contains what is still, though most inaccurately, called "the second Isaiah." Part B consists of seven fragments: chaps. xi. 10-16; xii.; xiii.-xiv. 23; xxi. (assigned to *three* different writers); xxiv.-xxvii.; xxxiii.; xxxiv.; xxxv.; besides xxiii. 15-18, which is supposed to be an appendix to the rest of the chapter. Chapter xix. 16-25 is regarded as "possibly

planation and so arrives at a number of additional facts which must exist if the hypothesis be true." In most cases "it is necessary to seek" those facts "by making experiments." "A *great many* tests," he adds, "must be . . . realized before the hypothesis can be accepted as a *true and complete* explanation. An explanation of facts," so tested, "is called a *theory*, and when a theory is confirmed by a great number of observations it is accepted as a *Law of Nature*." This, the author adds, is "the only test by which a theory can be accepted" as such (see pp. 10-12). Criticism, therefore, is not a "science" in the strict sense of the word *science*. But until at least the critic is able, without risk of error, to distinguish one author from another in known cases of joint authorship, he has no right to call upon us to accept his hypotheses as demonstrated facts where such evidence of joint authorship is lacking.

a post-exilic addition" to chap. xix. A glance at this division will show that the word "probably," and like phrases, occur with amusing frequency in the analysis. It does not seem to have occurred to the critics that ten thousand "probabilities" do not make one certainty, or that a system resting on mere probabilities cannot possibly be scientific in the proper sense of the word. And there is one vast improbability in the whole analysis. It assumes that the Jews had no sort of pride in their schools of the prophets, and took no care to preserve their names. And the fact that in their after history the Jews attached quite an unique importance to their scriptures would seem to preclude the possibility that even in earlier days they muddled up the writings of a number of unknown persons with those of the famous court chaplain to Hezekiah. The historic portions of the book (called C above) have a great importance in connection with the distinct statements in Chronicles that the prophets wrote considerable portions of the histories in the books of Samuel and Kings. The four chapters called C were obviously Isaiah's contribution to the history of his country, as chap. lii. of Jeremiah's prophecy forms part of Jeremiah's contribution to that of the reign of Zedekiah.¹

I passed over some points in my former paper which seem to me of some moment. Thus the words "in that day" occur 38 times in chaps. i.-xxxv. They occur only once in Second Isaiah (D). But many of the quotations in i.-xxxv. come from fragments asserted by the critics to have been written in the same (post-exilic) era to which D is assigned. The fact of their appearance only once in D supports my argument against the contention that D cannot have been

¹ The words at the end of Jer. li. are obviously the words of a later scribe, and have no authority whatever.

the work of Isaiah, namely, that it is oftener the *subject* than the *date* of a writing which conditions the expressions used in it. Of the occurrence of the phrase "in that day" in B as well as A, I may remark that it occurs 10 times in B, as against 27 times in A, which shows about the same proportion in each. If the phrase be absent from long passages of B, it is also absent from long passages of A. This consideration will explain its absence from D. Where it occurs, its occurrence is of course due to the fact that many chapters of A and B are devoted to the consideration of some destined and awful day of God's judgment. And it should be observed that the *frequent* use of this phrase only occurs in the first thirty-five chapters of the book, and in the prophecy of Zechariah, a post-exilic prophet. This tends to stamp Isaiah i.-xxxv. as by a single author, and its infrequent occurrence in chaps. xl.-lxvi. is due to a change of subject. At the very least there can be no doubt that the coming "day of the Lord" forms the leading subject in chaps. i.-xxxv.

Then we may note that the words "it shall come to pass in that day" are of frequent occurrence in chaps. i.-xxxv. Of these 6 are in A, and 4 in B, and thus are again distinctive of the whole of chaps. i.-xxxv. Beside these there are two instances of "and it shall come to pass" without "in that day." One occurs in A and one in B. There is also one instance of "it shall be *said* in that day." This is in B. But the occurrence of the phrase in this way strongly supports the belief that chaps. i.-xxxv. come from one pen.

Then take the word "ensign." The Hebrew word occurs in v. 26; xviii. 3; xxx. 17; xxxi. 9 (A); xi. 10, 12; xiii. 2 (B); xlix. 22 (D). Thus it is characteristic of *the whole of* Isaiah's prophecies, as distinguished from his *historical* chapters (C). It is seldom found elsewhere in the prophets.

Isaiah, again, frequently uses words signifying to "crouch," "lay low," "bring low." He does not always use the *same* word, it is true. But the idea common to them all occurs very seldom in the other prophets. The words are characteristic of both A and B, and once they occur in D. Thus the phrase is characteristic of Isaiah *as a whole*, and seldom occurs elsewhere.

Then the allusions to "rivers" and "streams" as signs of prosperity and peace occur in Isaiah far oftener than in the other prophets. Ezekiel, it is true, *mentions* "rivers" (in the *plural*) as often as Isaiah does. He never uses "streams" at all. But in the case of the prophet Ezekiel they occur in simple descriptions of scenery; whereas in Isaiah, as in xxxii. 2 (A); xxxiii. 21 (B); and frequently in D, they denote sources of wealth and comfort. One expression for "streams" only occurs in A (xxx. 25) and D (xliv. 4). In A.V. it is translated *water courses* here. Thus we have here, as frequently elsewhere, signs of agreement between A and D. Were the critics right, we should have more signs of agreement between B and D, inasmuch as *all* D, and the greater part of B, are ascribed by them to the post-exilic period.

God's might is sometimes expressed in the idea that He shakes the earth, and even the heavens. This idea occurs frequently in A and B, but *not* in D.

The word "fury" occurs with great frequency in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. In *this* case it occurs with great frequency in D, very seldom in B, and *never* in A. But we are frequently told by the critics that it is *D* from which all the severer descriptions of God's judgments are absent. Let them consult chaps. li., lix., lxiii., and lxvi.

It is further remarkable that "Sheol" is only twice in the

Old Testament used as referring to the idea of its being the habitation or *condition* of the sentient departed. It often means no more than "the grave." These two passages are chaps. v. 14, 15 (A) and xiv. 9-12 (B). This is a very strong sign, indeed, of unity of authorship of chaps. i.-xxxv. It has been quite a commonplace of orthodox theology that so few passages in the Old Testament indicate the life of man after death. And no attentive reader can pass over the marked likeness between chaps. xxxiv. 1-8 (B) and lxiii. 1-6 and lxiv. 1-3 (D).

It may be worth while to add that the expression "*ships of Tarshish*" occurs but seldom in the prophets. But it occurs in ii. 16; xxiii. 1, 13-14 (A); and in lx. 9 (D). It occurs only once more in the prophets (Ezek. xxvii. 25).

I will conclude with a reference to the larger issues of Biblical criticism. Can any one read Isa. xl.; xli. 15-20 (D), and compare these passages with chaps. xi. 1-13 (A, B); xii. (B; cf. liv. 1 [D]); xxv.; xxvi. 1-4; xxxv. (B), or compare xxvi. 12-15 with lxiii. 7-lxiv. 4, and not recognize the majesty of the thoughts, coupled with intense devotion of spirit and undoubting faith in God's Presence within the soul? Only Isaiah and Daniel among the writers of the Old Testament display such feeling, and they express them each in their own individual manner. One must apologize for what must be confessed to be the *peddling* character of a good deal of this criticism. It is (as Dr. Pusey said in his treatise on the Book of Daniel) a wearisome and even sickening task to track the enemy to his lair in this way. But there are some minds which can be reached only by showing that the enemy is vulnerable *on his own ground*. One would like, however, to conclude this investigation with considerations of a larger and more elevating kind, and to point out

that no book which was ever written is more instinct with the individuality of a single author than that ascribed to the prophet Isaiah, nor any book written of which the power of imaginative expression, combined with inward communion with God, is more evident. The book, moreover, contains prophecies which could not have been foreseen without supernatural assistance, even were we to date it so late as the moment when the Word of the Father began His earthly ministrations; and the ingenuity of purely naturalistic criticism has utterly failed to find any one or anything else to which the prophecies of the coming salvation, of its spread throughout the world, and of the "Servant of the Lord" Who was destined to announce it, could possibly have referred but to Him whose career on earth, and extraordinary influence after He ceased to dwell among us, were as unique as are the amazing prophecies found in one who was long ago recognized as "the Evangelical prophet."