

ART. IV.—CHEYNE'S "ORIGIN OF THE PSALTER."¹

PROFESSOR CHEYNE has added a new feature to the annual volume of Bampton Lectures by prefacing the lectures with an autobiography of himself. We do not quarrel with him for this innovation, for a man who publishes theories so contradictory to any opinions that have ever before been ventilated by a Bampton Lecturer in St. Mary's pulpit may well think himself called upon to explain to his readers who he is, and to show that he has a claim to be heard. If he can thereby prove himself to be at once capable and trustworthy, he will have gone far to conciliate the respect and goodwill even of those who are still obliged to differ from his conclusions.

Dr. Cheyne tells us that "he springs from an Evangelical stock" (p. xxvii.); that he became a disciple and sat at the feet of Ewald, but passed from his school in 1870 to that of Kuenen, and became as devoted to his new leader as he had been to his first teacher. He rests his claim for a hearing not only upon his being the "prophet" or interpreter of Kuenenism to English readers, but also on having advanced beyond Kuenen as an original thinker and critic on the lines laid down by his German master. So far, our sympathies for or against Dr. Cheyne will depend on the degree in which we sympathize with or are repelled by Kuenenism, which stands as a symbol of that system of Continental theological criticism which resolves the Bible into a number of discontinuous and often contradictory fragments whose authority, if any, is to be determined by the *schola criticorum* of the nineteenth and subsequent centuries. The English writers of the last generation of whom Dr. Cheyne speaks with approbation are Bishop Colenso, who wrote "a thankworthy book on the Pentateuch," the results of which Dr. Cheyne prophesied in 1871 "would be confirmed by an increasing number of critics"; and Mr. H. B. Wilson, of St. John's College, Oxford, whose name is well known as a writer in the once notorious *Essays and Reviews*. These names give some indication of the position taken up by Dr. Cheyne.

There is more to be learned from the Introduction. In 1870 Dr. Cheyne published a volume called "Isaiah Chronologically Arranged," containing "incisive statements" (p. xiii.), such as

¹ "The Origin and Religious Contents of the Psalter in the Light of Old Testament Criticism and the History of Religions," with an Introduction and Appendix. By THOMAS KELLY CHEYNE, M.A., D.D., Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, Canon of Rochester. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1891. Pp. 517.

that the Book of Isaiah was written by a number of authors, five at least of whom lived in Babylon, and that the Servant of the Lord in Isa. lii. and liii. "personified a purely poetical figure," and "was a glorification of the prophetic office." In 1880 he wrote another work on the "Prophecies of Isaiah," in which the authorship of the prophecies was restored to Isaiah, and the Servant of the Lord again became the Messiah; and other changes of like character were made, leading people to think that Dr. Cheyne had sown his critical wild oats and was becoming a sober theologian. From the reputation thus earned Dr. Cheyne derived much benefit, gaining admission for his Scriptural notes and comments in places where they would else have been excluded, and probably owing to it his Professorship, to which he was elected in 1885. Now we learn that he never really underwent any change of sentiment; but the years between 1870 and 1880 were "bitter years," when "the Church and the University would none of those things which criticism [supposed that it] had discovered." Dr. Cheyne found that his book of 1870 was unpopular; so, "to regain full sympathy with brethren *left behind*," without "the thought of a palinode entering his head," but simply adapting himself to his readers' backwardness in unbelief, on the principle of "seeing with the eyes of his expected readers," he maintained positions in 1880 which he now acknowledges that he did not at the time think to be true, and against which he all along believed that there was a preponderating weight of argument. This "self-suppression" Dr. Cheyne terms "a strong effort of faith in the unseen." Most men would apply a different name to it. With cynical contempt for his readers, he says that he took care that the *data* for the views which he really held should appear in the commentary; but "through the deliberate self-suppression which is the soul of that work," he "reserved his *results*" for an article which he was writing at the time for the "Encyclopædia Britannica" on Isaiah; the consequence of which was, he pathetically laments, that Stade and Kuenen did not know that he had anticipated them in their views, and that he had taken "not only a step in advance, but a step which other critics are only just beginning to take" (p. xix.). What does this mean but that Dr. Cheyne, finding that his views were making him unpopular in England, set out other views as though they were his own, when they really were not, still trying to make converts to his real opinions by introducing statements which made for them, while he professed and appeared to be arguing for their opposites? How are we to designate such conduct? How are we to trust the man who confesses to it without blushing, and only laments that the course adopted by him to gain repu-

tation in England lost it him in Germany? As late as 1885 he acknowledges that his method (in his "Jeremiah") was still, as a rule, to avoid drawing the conclusion to which his premisses led; but he allowed himself to do so on some occasions, from "a dawning consciousness that the necessity for minimizing the results of literary criticism, even in addressing clerical students, was passing away." But "the transitional period is not yet quite over"; when it is, he will "reconstruct his commentaries." Meantime he is "not ashamed to have offered one more sacrifice" (*i.e.*, taught what he does not believe) "to the temporary needs of the Church."

We have, therefore, no grounds for believing that the present volume contains the whole extent of Dr. Cheyne's divergences from received opinions. He goes as far as he thinks that Church opinion will allow him in 1891, just as he did in 1880, and if he can educate English Churchmen to go further, we may expect him to abandon his "provisional standing-ground," and to advocate theories still more destructive and more subversive of the fragments of the Christian faith, which superficially he seems still to retain.

We have not completed the survey of the Introduction, and shall presently return to it; but it is time now to turn to the lectures themselves. They profess to be, in the first place, an inquiry into the origin of the Psalms. We may remind our readers that the Psalms are ordinarily divided into five books. Speaking broadly and generally, the first book is commonly assigned to the reign of David, the second to the reign of Hezekiah, the third to the reign of Josiah; the fourth containing the rest of the Psalms down to the Captivity, and the fifth those of the Captivity. This, we repeat, is only a broad view, requiring modification and correction in particulars. Hebrew tradition, embodied in the superscriptions, gives the authorship of seventy-three Psalms to David, of two to Solomon, of twelve to Asaph, of twelve to the sons of Korah, of one to Ethan, and of one to Moses, the remaining forty-nine being anonymous. Dr. Cheyne's aim is to throw all the Psalms into as late a period as possible. In this he deserts the guidance of his old teacher, Ewald, who declares that "nothing can be more untrue and more perverse than the opinion that there are any Maccabean psalms at all in the Psalter," and he follows Hitzig, Lengerke, Reuss, Grätz, and his later masters. Improving, as he thinks, on their views, he comes to the conclusion that there may be *one* psalm composed previous to the Captivity—the eighteenth; but he "cannot complain if some prefer to regard the psalm as an *imaginative work* of the Exile." (This is Dr. Cheyne's manner of insinuating that it is post-Exilic, though he does not like to say so.) Putting this one psalm

aside, which is "rich in mythic elements" (p. 204), Dr. Cheyne pronounces *ex cathedra* that all the rest, with the possible exception of "lines or verses embedded in the later psalms," are the product of an age subsequent to the Captivity; and that forty-two of them are of the date of the Maccabees or just before them.

It may be asked why Dr. Cheyne should be so urgent to throw forward the date of the Psalms. He enables us to answer this question, though, according to his manner, which he has described and justified, he puts his statement in the form of a premiss, leaving the conclusion to be drawn by his reader. The school of which Dr. Cheyne aspires to be the English Coryphæus regards the Law as a pious fraud foisted upon the world at the earliest in the reigns of Hezekiah or Josiah, and more probably after the return from Babylon. But "that the Psalter as a whole presupposes the Law is not to be doubted" (p. xxx.). In that case, supposing that the Psalter dates from David or Hezekiah or Josiah, the Pentateuch cannot be a post-Exilic forgery, but it must have had an existence previous to those kings' reigns. Therefore the Psalter *must not* have been written till after the return from Captivity, or—if such a theory can possibly be made to look plausible—till the Maccabean era.

There is another reason. Dr. Cheyne holds that the doctrines of resurrection and eternal life, as well as other great truths, came to the Jews from Zoroaster, or at least that they would not have been developed in the Hebrew mind except by contact with Zoroastrianism in the Persian period of Jewish history. But they are to be found in the Psalms—in some of those, even, that are attributed to David, as *Psa. xvi.* But on the Zoroastrian theory it is impossible that such a conception could have existed in pre-Exilic times, "except, indeed, upon the hypothesis of a 'heaven-descended theology'" (p. xxxi.). In other words, a Hebrew psalmist could not teach resurrection, immortality, and future judgment before contact with Persia, except we grant that those truths were imparted to him by a Divine revelation instead of being worked out by the operation of the human mind; and that hypothesis is inadmissible. Therefore the Psalms that deal with this conception and several other spiritual truths *must be* post-Exilic.

What are the grounds on which Dr. Cheyne relegates the more important Psalms to the Maccabean era? What is the evidence external and internal? External evidence there is none. We read that Simon Maccabeus took a tower in Jerusalem that had been occupied by the enemy, and "entered it with harps and cymbals, and with viols and hymns and songs, because there was destroyed a great enemy out of Israel.

He ordained also that that day should be kept every year with gladness" (1 Macc. xiii. 51). We read further, "Moreover he strengthened all those of his people that were brought low, the law he searched out, and every contemner of the law and wicked person he took away. He beautified the sanctuary and multiplied the vessels of the temple" (xiv. 14). This is absolutely all the external evidence. How is it evidence at all? Thus, according to Dr. Cheyne, "What *more natural* than that Simon should follow the example of David, his prototype, as described in Chronicles, and make fresh regulations for the liturgical services of the sanctuary?" But is there any statement made that he did so? None at all. "Is it *likely*," continues Dr. Cheyne, "that he beautified the exterior and took no thought for the greatest of the spiritual glories of the temple, those 'praises of Israel' which Jehovah was well pleased to 'inhabit'?" If so, he had no feeling for that exquisite psalm which calls the ministers of the temple happy because 'they can be always praising' God." Well, suppose he had not any such feeling, which is much more likely than that he had. But whether he had or not, is there any statement here that he collected, for use or in a book, a number of psalms composed by a galaxy of contemporary poets? Dr. Cheyne's external evidence exists solely in his own imagination. He says that "Maccabean enthusiasm *ought to have produced*" (therefore it *did* produce) "an appreciable effect on sacred poetry" (p. xxxi.), and that "we *may and must conjecture* that Simon" (who "did not despise Greek architecture") "devoted himself to the reconstitution of the temple psalmody" (p. 11), though "we have no record of it" (*ibid.*).

What of the internal evidence? Dr. Cheyne allows that nothing is to be learnt from "linguistic criteria." "But then we may and must require that in typical Maccabean psalms there should be some fairly distinct allusions to Maccabean circumstances, I mean expressions which lose half their meaning when interpreted of other times" (p. 16). We are bold to say that there is not a single psalm that will answer to that requirement, which Dr. Cheyne allows to be a necessary requirement. Take the psalm that he selects first of all to deal with, as the most favourable to his cause—"one of the most promising of the psalms," as he calls it—Psa. cxviii. We ask our readers to read that psalm through, and to say whether they find any "fairly distinct allusion to Maccabean circumstances" in it. We venture to say that there is not a word in it more applicable to the battle of Bethsura and the subsequent rededication of the profaned altar by Judas Maccabeus in 165 than to any other victory or deliverance of the Jews from the time of David to that date, or to any other

festive occasion, such as the anointing of David after Ishbosheth's death, or one of his conquests of the Philistines (Rudinger), or the deliverance of Hezekiah from Sennacherib (Dæderlein, Dean Johnson), or the setting up of the altar of burnt offering in 536 (Ewald), or the foundation of the second temple (Delitzsch), or its dedication (Hengstenberg), or any other remarkable event. There is absolutely no Maccabean colouring in it. Dr. Cheyne finds "allusions" in two expressions. Verse 22 is one well known to us by its being quoted in a Messianic acceptance by our Lord (Matt. xxi. 42, Mark xii. 10, Luke xx. 17), and by St. Peter (Acts iv. 11, 1 Pet. ii. 7), and referred to in like manner by St. Paul (Eph. ii. 20): "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." This "stone" is, according to Dr. Cheyne, "the Asmonæan family" (p. 17), and this "allusion" to that family is proof that the psalm is Maccabean. Can anyone except Dr. Cheyne see why the stone should mean the Asmonæan family? He assumes an "allusion," and then argues from his assumption. This is his method.

The other allusion which Dr. Cheyne finds to Maccabean times is the use of the word "light": "God is the Lord which hath showed us light" (ver. 27). This he assumes to be an allusion to the feast of dedication, instituted in Maccabean times, which Josephus says was called "Light." Therefore the psalm belongs to Maccabean times. Again, we find that an assumption is first made and then argued from. Why should not the word be equally well an allusion to the pillar of light in the wilderness (see Neh. ix. 21), or to the light and gladness which the Jews experienced on Mordecai's being honoured (Esth. viii. 16), or to the "Let there be light" of Gen. i. 3, or any other place where light is spoken of?

Psa. cxviii. is the one psalm which Dr. Cheyne has selected first out of the whole Psalter as the psalm on which to lay the foundation of his theory, because "containing fairly distinct allusions to Maccabean circumstances," and we have seen what those allusions are, and what Dr. Cheyne's arguments from them amount to. Having thus got a *πὸν στῶ*, he proceeds swimmingly. He takes the psalm which by such "distinct allusions" has been *proved* to be Maccabean, and finds in it a sentiment, perhaps of thanksgiving, perhaps of penitence, or anything else, similar to a sentiment in another psalm. Then that other psalm is shown by that similarity to be of the same date as the first. Thus we get two Maccabean psalms; then there is something in the second psalm like something in a third, therefore the third is Maccabean, and so on *ad libitum*. This he calls his comparative method, and he is very proud of

it. It certainly is a very easy process, and by Dr. Cheyne's two methods combined we would undertake to prove that any thing was written at any time. We believe that there is not an argument in the whole of this volume which would be pronounced sound after being submitted to a logical test in accordance with the acknowledged canons of reasoning.

We have shown what Dr. Cheyne's Maccabean allusions are in the psalm which he instances as most favourable to him. We shall not follow him in his other instances, where his case is still weaker. We will notice a few of the results of his system, and bring to an end an ungrateful task. The "headstone of the corner" we have already seen to be the Asmonæan family. "Thine Holy One," in Psa. xvi. 10, who is "not to see corruption," is the psalmist, as the representative of faithful Israel (p. 217). Psa. xxii. ("My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?") is of the date of Nehemiah, and it is the personified Genius of Israel that is meant by it and by Isa. liii. Psa. xlv. ("Gird thee with thy sword upon thy thigh") is "a courtier's love-poem in the post-Exile period," and its subject is Ptolemy Philadelphus. Psa. lxxii. ("Give the king thy judgments") is also a poem glorifying Ptolemy Philadelphus (a singularly wicked man, we may note in passing, who, though a Greek, married his sister). Psa. cx. ("The Lord said unto my Lord") is, "in the fullest sense, a glorification of Simon Maccabeus" (p. 24). "Who else *can be* meant but Simon?" (*ibid.*). It is "an encomium upon Simon, who, by the capture of Acra and the expulsion of its garrison (May, 142), had completed the liberation of Jerusalem, and rendered it possible for a psalmist to say, "All eagerness are Thy people in the day of Thy muster upon the sacred mountains, cx. 3" (p. 25). Enough. The Messianic conception is evacuated by Dr. Cheyne's system. Here is his account of it. "What is the fundamental idea of the Messianic psalms? Simply this, that the people of Israel is to work out the Divine purpose in the earth, and to do this with such utter self-forgetfulness that each of its own successes shall but add a fresh jewel to Jehovah's crown" (p. 340). No wonder that he should add: "All these psalms are only Messianic in a sense which is psychologically justifiable; they are, as I have shown, neither typically nor in the ordinary sense prophetically Messianic" (*ibid.*).

We must sorrowfully acknowledge that the school originated in England by some of the Essayists and Reviewists, and by Bishop Colenso, is revived and reconstructed among us. Its immediate object is the overthrow of the authority of the Old Testament, which Dr. Cheyne calls "a reform of Apologetic," and to succeed in this, under the present conditions of "our English orthodoxy," he tells us that two principles must be

constantly urged until they are admitted. One of these is the ignorance (called "self-limitation") of our Lord, the other is the illumination by the Holy Spirit of "each faithful Christian" (called "continual guidance"). At two Church Congresses, and before the London Biblical Society, and in various publications, Dr. Cheyne has pressed these views, he tells us, on the English clergy. He found some support and encouragement, but it was uphill work.

It seemed too much to hope to see results, when—who could have believed it?—in the autumn of 1889 a very able recognition of both principles proceeded from the pen of the Principal of Pusey House (see his fine essay in "Lux Mundi"). Now, I will not accuse Mr. Gore, who is a ripe theological thinker, of borrowing from me without acknowledgment. But fairness and brotherly feeling must compel him to recognise that the movement which he advocates for the reform of the Old Testament sections of apologetic theology, was initiated in the Anglican Church on almost the same lines by another (p. xxv.).

When the rationalist school first lifted its head in England the two great parties in the English Church combined to repudiate its doctrines, and the Church showed its vitality and healthiness by shaking itself free of them. Will it do so now? Dr. Cheyne jubilantly announces that in that respect 1890 is not 1880. Nor is it. Church Congresses have much to answer for, from the Congress held at Reading onwards, in allowing themselves to become an area for ventilating semi-agnostic and "critical" views. The electors to the Bampton Lectures have much to answer for, who are bound to appoint lecturers whose aim it shall be "to confirm and establish the Christian faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics," and have not done so. But the person that has most to answer for is Mr. Gore, who has held open the door between the High Church Party and the Rationalists, and has perplexed the younger school of Pusey and Keble, by making them feel that they cannot condemn rationalism without at the same time condemning him whom they have learnt to look upon as one of their present leaders. Men are standing now, for the moment, at the parting of paths. In which direction will they move onwards? "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. vi. 16).

F. MEYRICK.

