

duties ; at the same time, his clerical neighbours look very askance at him.

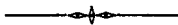
Then a church may grow gradually empty. Yet so long as the benefice is endowed, and the moral life of the clergyman is above suspicion, he is practically irremovable. But can we imagine the Congregationalists sitting down in despair if the numbers attending the City Temple should drop from 7,000 to 700, or the Wesleyans being content to see the congregations at St. James's Hall reduced to one-quarter of their present number ?

"But what," I shall be asked, "of the parson's freehold, of security of tenure, and of the rights of patronage?" "Does the Church," I might ask in return, "exist for these?" For what did her Founder establish her? For the people or for the clergy? Is the Church to be tied and bound by the financial and legal fetters of the past? Is her work to be hindered and her usefulness to be lessened by these?

I am not asking for the *abolition* of the parochial system ; I am only asking for such *modifications* of it as may be necessary in order for the Church to do far better than she is doing to-day a very special work—that is, the gaining of a greater influence over the masses of the people.

This article is already too long for me to enter further into details. Such a book as this to which I have drawn attention at least helps us to see things as they are. And this is surely the first step towards our rousing ourselves to make them more nearly what they should be.

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ART. V.—STUDIES ON ISAIAH—IV.

ISAIAH AND HIS MISSION.

MODERN criticism claims to have "completely dispelled, on the evidence of the Bible itself, the view of inspiration and prediction" which has "long been held in the Church." It confesses that this view is "difficult to define." But it is explained to be "something like this: that the prophet beheld a vision of the future in its actual detail, and read this off as a man may read the history of the past out of a book or a clear memory."¹ It is always easy to refute a theory or doctrine when one states it in one's own language, and not in the language of those who hold it. But the theory

¹ "The Prophecies of Isaiah," by Professor G. A. Smith, vol. i., p. 372.

of inspiration which it is thus attempted to set aside is not "something like" what the writer has described, but "something" very *unlike* it. Nowhere, save in the prophecies of Daniel, do we find clear and detailed statements, like history written beforehand. The rest of the prophecies are shadowy, mysterious, broad in outline, and, as a rule, decidedly vague in detail, though occasionally, as every student of prophecy knows, certain remarkable touches of detail are introduced, which have been most wonderfully fulfilled in the history of One, and One only. So far from the "evidence of the Bible itself" "dispelling" such a view of prophecy, it has for nineteen centuries been held by men of equal or superior intelligence to that of the modern critic—men who are quite as competent judges of "evidence" as he can possibly be—to have established the fact that the prophets did foreshadow beforehand events which no "moral and religious convictions," however "pure," nor any "knowledge" they could have possessed of "certain fundamental laws of God," nor any amount of "loyalty to" such laws, could have enabled them to foresee.¹ That *some*—perhaps a good many—of the prophecies contained in the prophetic writings may be explained on naturalistic grounds such as these we are not concerned to deny. But that they *all* can be thus explained is a view which any candid and unbiassed inquirer can see to be altogether "dispelled" by the "evidence" Holy Writ contains. There is nothing in such a sweeping demolition of the prophetic element in Scripture, until lately believed to be one of the strongest evidences for revealed religion, which appears to us either "profitable" or "edifying," but much that is the very reverse. We put it to those of our countrymen who, as Dr. Pusey used to say, are wont to admit the force of an objection without seeing whither it may lead them, whether there remain any evidence for the Divine personality of Christ, any distinction, save perhaps in degree, between Him and other religious teachers, any objective authority whatever for the truth of our holy religion, if the evidence from prophecy, from miracles, from historical documents, and from the supernatural Divine guidance of those specially commissioned to teach in God's name—known hitherto as inspiration—be thus unceremoniously ordered out of court.

We hear a great deal about the "evolution" of Divine

¹ Professor G. A. Smith, "The Prophecies of Isaiah," *ibid.* The Professor goes on to say that "Isaiah prophesied and predicted all he did from loyalty to two simple truths—that sin must be punished, and that the people of God must be saved." That Isaiah was loyal to these truths is cheerfully admitted, but that this could have accounted for "all" his predictions is one of the many unproved assertions of the critics.

revelation in these days. No doubt there was such an evolution, though not such an evolution as the critics are willing to grant. The true evolution of Divine truth can only be understood by conceiving of the prophet as he has for 3,000 years been conceived of—namely, as the supernaturally inspired guide of God's people, and the authoritative unfold of the spiritual principles which underlie His laws. Modern criticism does not *disprove* his existence. It does not even attempt to do so, as any of its readers may see for themselves. It simply ignores it or denies it point-blank, and then, as usual, calls this denial a "proof." But on the assumption—by no means an unreasonable one—that the Jews knew as much about the course of their own history as a modern critic, the position of the prophet in the elder Dispensation is a cardinal point of the whole system. We read in Deut. xviii. 15-23 what his functions were. We assume, it is true, that Deuteronomy, by whomsoever written, was early and authentic. It has never been proved to be otherwise, save on assumptions which no one has a right to make. Moses, Deuteronomy tells us, was a prophet who spoke with authority from God. In time to come (there is no "vision" here, we may observe, "of the future in actual detail," "read off" as one "may read out of a book") another prophet was to arise, who should speak with at least equal authority, and, we may presume, should "set in order the things that were lacking" in the work of his predecessor. Meanwhile a succession of prophets was to be maintained, men who should instruct God's people in their duties; and a very simple criterion was given to the people whereby they might know whether they were to give heed to their teacher or not—namely, the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of their predictions. This is part of the "evidence" which the Bible contains as to the facts of "inspiration" and "prediction." We may, of course, accept or reject that evidence, just as we may accept or reject the religion it presupposes. There is only one thing we are *not* free to do, and that is to overlook or ignore it. And this is precisely the one thing which the modern critic asks us to do.

A succession of such prophets, then, arose to teach, and, when need required, to vindicate the Divine "statutes and judgments." In the time of the Judges they appeared but seldom. At length Samuel arose, and his successful predictions marked him out as the coming civil and religious reformer of his day. But we may safely say that, had no Israel existed before his time, as some critics would have us believe, or had no Divine "statutes and judgments" existed for him to appeal to, his mission must have failed. The prophets gathered

round David and his successors at Jerusalem, and to them we owe the national records and their steadfast rebuke of backsliding, be it on the part of the king or on the part of his subjects. But, as has already been intimated, the reign of Ahaz was an epoch of dismay and degradation. Israel had been carried away captive, and Judah was committed to an apostasy more appalling than any yet experienced. It is at critical periods only of Israelite history that the supernatural element in revelation comes prominently forward. And so at a moment of overwhelming calamity such as has been described there is an outburst of prophetic, just as at other times there was an outburst of miraculous, energy. Hosea, Amos, Micah, and, above all, the great evangelical prophet Isaiah, are sent to warn the people of their danger. And this they do, not only by their moral elevation of character, and their crushing rebukes of sin, but by unveiling the future in a way which is altogether unexplainable by natural causes. One characteristic all the prophets had in common, and it is reflected in the Psalms, which translate the prophetic utterances into the language of the sanctuary. It is their profound conviction of the uselessness of mere outward observance when unaccompanied by the disposition to obey the great moral law which the Creator and Saviour of the Jews had given them. Such was the function of the prophets under the law. Such, as history tells us, has been the no less necessary function of the clergy of the Christian Church. And thus is manifested the unity of plan under the law and the Gospel alike. Institutions are given to men far beyond their comprehension or power to obey. And there is a Dispensation of the Spirit, entrusted to God's ministers, to unfold, or, as the popular phrase runs now, to "evolve," the hidden meaning of the Divine precepts, as well as to "hold the mirror up to Nature," and to convict men of their disobedience to such precepts as they were able to understand.

The well-known Church poet Keble describes for us the true idea of the "seer" as it is pictured, not by the modern critic, but by the Scriptures themselves. Every student of Holy Scripture will remember that the picture is based on Balaam's description of the nature of the prophet's vision in Numb. xxiv. 16, 17 :

" Oh for a sculptor's hand,
That thou might'st take thy stand,
Thy wild hair floating on the eastern breeze,
Thy tranced yet open gaze
Fixed on the desert haze
As one who deep in heaven some airy pageant sees.

“ In outline dim and vast
 Their fearful shadows cast
 The giant forms of empires on their way
 To ruin ; one by one
 They tower, and they are gone.”¹

Here, we may observe, we do not find “ details ” presupposed, or history written as “ in a book,” but the grand broad features of events in outline, though, as in Isaiah and elsewhere, sufficient details may be added here and there to convince the most careless, when the hour for fulfilment has arrived, that the Divine Spirit has revealed things to come by the mouth of His servants. We will add from the same poet another view of the prophet’s mission, which is not in conflict with that given above, but which completes its scope :

“ He on the rock may bid us stand, and see
 The outskirts of His march of mystery,
 His endless warfare with man’s wilful heart.
 First, His great power He to the sinner shows,
 Lo ! at His angry blast the rocks unclose,
 And to their base the trembling mountains part.

“ God is not in the earthquake ; but behold
 From Sinai’s caves are bursting, as of old,
 The flames of His consuming, jealous ire.
 Woe to the sinner, should stern Justice prove
 His chosen attribute ; but He in Love
 Hastens to proclaim, ‘ God is not in the fire.’ ”²

In other words, the prophet bids men understand the principles of Divine evolution—bids them look forward from the present proclamation of God’s wrath to a time when, under the dispensation of the Spirit, the voice of conscience shall take the place of the terrors of the law in determining human action. But we need not confine the province of evolution to the visible and natural. We may depend upon it that Imagination, and Awe, and Mystery, and Reverence, and Godly Fear have at least as large a part to play in man’s relations with the Invisible as the narrow deductions of a criticism which is strictly bounded by the “ things that are seen,” and that there are “ more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of ” in such a contracted “ philosophy.”

Of Isaiah’s life we have but few details, though even those are far in excess of what as a rule we learn of the writers of the Old and New Testament. Theirs was no vulgar ambition. They desired not notoriety or the praise of men. It was enough for them if they fulfilled the will of the Most High. Isaiah, we are told, prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham, but he does not appear to have attained any remarkable prominence until Ahaz became king. Then he

¹ Keble, “ Christian Year,” Second Sunday after Easter.

² *Ibid.*, Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

stood forward as the antagonist of that monarch in his contempt of the Divine law. It seems most probable, as we have already seen, that the great prologue to his prophecies contained in chap. i. was written in that reign. We hear no more of him until Hezekiah succeeded his ungodly father, and Isaiah at once steps into the commanding position which he held during Hezekiah's whole reign. His influence with the king appears to have been unbounded, and its source was obviously the consistency with which the prophet maintained the superiority of obedience to the revealed law of God over all devices of mere human policy. It is, unfortunately, necessary in the present chaotic state of Biblical criticism to point out that the whole history of the relations between Isaiah and Hezekiah, as of those at an earlier period between Nathan and David, Elijah and Ahab, Oded and Asa, Jehu and Jehoshaphat, Jehoiada and Joash, are utterly unintelligible, except on the supposition that a religious polity was then in existence of a far more complete and extended character than the four chapters Exod. xx.-xxiii. (with the addition, according to some critics, of a few verses in Exod. xxxiv.). The question must be argued on far larger principles of historical verisimilitude than are contained in the cut-and-dried verbal analysis, and the equally cut-and-dried *a priori* objections, of the critical school.

It is needless to recount the further history of Isaiah, since we find it contained in the book attributed to the prophet. The books of Kings were apparently written by a series of men who had made good their claim to the title of prophet in the way prescribed by Moses, to which reference has already been made, and the historical part of the book of the prophet Isaiah, which is found also in the Second Book of Kings, is obviously Isaiah's contribution to the history of his country. The last time he appears before us is when he prophesies to Hezekiah, on the occasion of the visit of the ambassadors of Merodach-baladan, the future captivity of Judah in that city. To all but the *a priori* critic that prophecy, in the then condition of the world, as far transcends the limits of ordinary human foresight as chaps. xl. to lxvi. can do. It also forms a natural and fitting introduction to those chapters. So far, therefore, as it goes, this fact tends to support the theory of unity of authorship. There is a tradition that Isaiah was one of the victims of the furious persecution which, according to Josephus, Manasseh commenced against the prophets and servants of God. But there is no evidence on which we can rely for the statement. And it is highly improbable that so atrocious a deed could have been passed over without notice by the inspired historians.

We will add a few words on Isaiah's characteristics as a writer. There is a marked difference between his prophecies and those of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Jeremiah's personal feelings are continually expressed in his writings—his shrinking from the discharge of his uncongenial duties, his anxiety, his appeals for help, his outbursts of distress and apprehension. Ezekiel's personal characteristics stand before us no less clearly. The idiosyncrasies of the prophet's character seem often to have determined the form in which his message was delivered. Thus Ezekiel continually *acts* his message, so to speak. In other words, he is himself a figure or sign of the truths he designs to impress on others. But Isaiah lets drop no hints of his personal character or feelings. Majestic, impassive, eloquent, picturesque, he nevertheless loses his individuality in his message. And in this he is unlike any other prophet. And, be it further observed, these characteristics are as plainly observable in the last twenty-seven chapters of his prophecy as of the rest. Like Ezekiel, he has splendid powers of description. But Ezekiel's descriptive powers chiefly display themselves in matters of human interest, as in his graphic description in chap. viii. of the abominations wrought in Jerusalem; in his striking picture of the career of Aholah and Aholibah; and in his magnificent invective, in the form of a lamentation, against Tyre and the luxury in which she wallowed. Jeremiah does not often indulge himself in descriptions or figurative passages. His eloquence, which is undeniable, is of a different type. His best description is that in chap. xiv. 1-6 of the dearth; but its beauty consists, not in its grandeur of conception, but in its vividness of detail. Isaiah stands alone, whether it be in his powerful indictment of the iniquity of his nation, and their tendency to prefer obedience to positive rather than moral precepts (chap. i.; *cf.* xxxiii. 15; xliii. 23, 24), or in his vivid descriptions of Nature in its relation to man (chap. xxxv.; *cf.* xli. 18; xlii. 7; xliii. 19, 20; li. 10-12; lxv. 19), of Nature itself (chap. xxxiii. 9, 21; *cf.* lv. 12, 13), or in his mode of putting his appeals and rebukes (chap. xxi. 19, 20; xxxiii. 14-17; *cf.* xl. 3-9; xxxiv. 3-11; *cf.* lx. 1-9; lxiii. 1-4), or in his view of the mission of the servant of God (chap. xi. 1-9; *cf.* lxi. 1-6). It needs not to multiply instances; every careful reader will be able to supply himself with them. The grand individuality of the prophet is stamped as clearly upon his prophecies as that of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, or any other great and original writer, upon their works.¹

¹ It will be observed that these remarkable characteristics are found *throughout* the prophecy which has come down to us under the prophet's name.

A few words will be expected on the question whether, as has been of late very widely asserted, the last twenty-seven chapters of the book are by the same hand as the rest. It would, in the writer's opinion, be unwise to make questions of authorship, as distinguished from that of authority, into tests of orthodoxy. Nevertheless, it must be remarked that while it is possibly a matter of comparatively small consequence whether the latter part of the prophecy of Isaiah be by the same hand as the rest or not, it is a matter of considerable importance by what arguments the difference of authorship is supposed to have been established. Learned University Professors have been content to rest the distinction between the "first" and "second" Isaiah simply and solely upon the considerations (1) that in the later chapters the standpoint of the prophet is Babylon, whereas in the former it is Jerusalem; and (2) that in the former part of the prophecy the Messiah is regarded as one who brings salvation, in the latter He is depicted as the suffering servant of the Lord. With regard to the first, it begs the whole question of supernatural or spiritual influence. With Professor G. A. Smith, it assumes that miraculous vision of things future is a thing impossible, a proposition which no instructed Christian will be ready to concede. The second argument, if argument it can be called, is certainly not a little surprising. It assumes that a writer cannot possibly regard a subject from two different points of view—an assumption which to state is to refute. The writer of these lines has for years past been discussing the question of Biblical Criticism in the *CHURCHMAN* from the historical and literary standpoint. In the present papers he is discussing it from the point of view of prophecy. Therefore, on the principles of the University Professor of the day, his present papers cannot be his, but must be those of somebody else. Such logic as this it is which prevents the present writer, and urges him to the endeavour to prevent as many other people as possible, from being as content as apparently very many of them are at present—*jurare in verba magistri*.

Nor is this all. The supporters of the "second Isaiah" are wont to allure their readers, as one endeavours to capture a reluctant horse, by the argument that, after all, there are only two. But when one comes to look into the matter, we find that this is hardly an ingenuous statement of fact. The same principles which prove the existence of a second Isaiah are found to prove that there are three, and possibly several more, Isaiahs, who have contributed their mite to the common store. Mr. Skinner, in the "Cambridge Bible for Schools," tells us that "a little over two-thirds of the prophetic chapters" in the first part of Isaiah are by the prophet.

That is to say, about twenty-four chapters. And from these twenty-four chapters "stylistic features" are deduced from which we are supposed to be able to obtain a clear idea of the characteristics of the author's work.¹ The same writer gives an analysis of the contents of the "second Isaiah," which seems to be conducted on the principle that all similarities of expression between it and the former part go for nothing, while all differences of expression are vital; and that all the contrasts in style noticed by Dr. Driver are of consequence, while all the coincidences gathered together in Mrs. Jeffreys' valuable little book (the Hebrew scholarship of which is attested by scholars so well known as Dr. Sinker and Professor Margoliouth) are of no consequence. It is true that the alliteration which is so marked a feature in the first part of the prophet's writings does not occur so markedly in the other. Still, it *is found*, and it may fairly be alleged that the differences are no greater than might be expected in the same writer when treating of a different subject at a different time of his life. One of the coincidences which are explained away is the term "Holy One of Israel," an expression which only occurs five times outside the writings of Isaiah, and then only in writers subsequent to him.² The admission is made that "each writer is gifted in an unusual degree with the sense of sublimity," but "the sublimity of Isaiah's images is that of concentrated (often destructive) energy"—after exquisite pictures, such as that of chap. xxxv., have been eliminated, let us remember, and only twenty-four chapters left—while "the later writer's imagination revels chiefly in the thought of physical magnitude, the spacious heavens," and so on (in spite of the contents of chaps. xl., xli., xlii., xlv., xlvii., li., lii., liii.; indeed, pretty nearly every chapter of the "second Isaiah" bears witness, like the first thirty-five chapters, to the prophet's power of imagination and of forcible and minute description. Once more, we may note that the Jews were not inclined to allow their prophets to be anonymous. Even the one chapter of Obadiah was attested by the author's name. Is it likely that the greatest and most splendid of them would have been allowed to remain unknown? And *could*

¹ The parts of the first thirty-five chapters which are not by Isaiah are given as follows: xi. 10-16, xii., xiii.-xiv. 23, xv., xvi. (these chapters contain a postscript by Isaiah, xxi., xxiv.-xxvii., xxxiii., xxxiv., xxxv.). Of course, this list depends on the assumption that the prophet could not have foreseen the events which he predicts. It is odd that chap. xxxv., which is "post-exilic," is repeatedly quoted by the "second," or ought we to call him the *tenth*, Isaiah.

² It is hardly fair, it may be added, to select a few of the "stylistic" coincidences in the prophet's writings as the only ones which "arrest attention," and then to describe them as a "somewhat slender array."

he have remained unknown had he wished to do so? But what need of further discussion? This is not criticism, it is special pleading—the special pleading of the opposing counsel in the court of justice. The fact remains that in no other part of Holy Writ is there an instance of such magnificent eloquence, such fervid and vigorous appeals, such a thrilling power of awakening expectation and hope, such a descriptive faculty, such felicity of illustration, such poetic genius, coupled with such a sublime detachment of the personality of the prophet from his subject-matter, as is to be found in the writings ascribed to him.¹ The honours of minute criticism may, perhaps, be divided; the larger literary aspects of the question demand for the writer of the whole of the prophecies attributed to Isaiah a mind as capacious as that of Shakespeare. The matter of authorship is, as has been said, of little consequence in itself. But as an instance of the large assumptions, the narrowness, the one-sidedness, of the Germanizing school, it is well worthy of closer investigation than the actual importance of the question at stake requires. Without elevating the unity of Isaiah into an article of faith, we may still “refuse to believe” that the prophet was unable to have foreseen the coming of the “Servant of the Lord,” as well as the salvation which He came to bring. We may feel that, however the vision of the prophet may have been partially fulfilled by the types and forerunners of Christ, there was One, and One only, who corresponded to it in every minute particular, as the Christian conscience has acknowledged for nearly 1900 years. And we may note the fact that, as far as the question of prediction is concerned, it was quite as impossible to foresee such an extension of God’s kingdom among the Gentiles as is prophesied in chaps. xlix. and lx., and the idea of such an extension was as much, or even more, opposed to the whole tenor of the Jewish thought of the day, if we suppose the book of the prophet Isaiah was composed in the year 30 A.D., as if it dated from the reign of Hezekiah. If the naturalistic school is to eliminate prediction, it must make its “second Isaiah,” not post-exilic, but post-Christian.

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¹ This part of the subject would repay special study. It will be observed that even in the short prophecy of Micah, Isaiah’s contemporary, whose prophecies, like those of Isaiah, are chiefly addressed to Judah, not only are Isaiah’s higher qualities distinctly wanting, but the personal element continually comes in. See chaps. iii. 1, 8; vii. 1, 7-9.

(To be continued.)