

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

only be had by those who feel the strength of Christ within them. That strength is not only the purity that sees God, it is the faith that overcomes the world. What is the meaning of that phrase, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"? It means nothing, if it signifies less than this: "My strength is your strength. That force in me which has borne the yoke of humanity until the yoke has become easy and the burden light, is ready to repeat the experience in you. That Spirit in me which has endured the contradiction of sinners waits to support in you the toils of the labouring and heavy-laden. I call you to no single-handed combat. I am with you always. I summon you to no mere personal experiment; greater is He that is for you than all who can be against you. I ask from you no impossible sacrifice; my grace is sufficient for you. The guarantee for your triumph will be the survival of the strongest: *because I live, ye shall live also.* In my patience ye shall possess your souls; in the continuity of my life shall your life be continued; for I have overcome the world, and therefore I can give you rest."

GEORGE MATHESON.

---

THE CALL AND COMMISSION OF ISAIAH.

ISAIAH VI.

THERE can be no doubt that this Chapter records Isaiah's call to the prophetic office. The demand for a messenger (Verse 8), and the Prophet's ready response, "Here am I, send me," evidently imply that Isaiah is now for the first time commissioned as a Divine ambassador. Had Isaiah been previously accustomed to bear God's messages, his preparation in

being cleansed from sin (Verse 7), and God's hesitation and inquiry, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" are alike unintelligible. The only reasons that can be urged against this view are (1) the presumption from the order of the Book that Chapters i.-v. had been delivered before Chapter vi., and (2) the statement of Chapter i. Verse 1, that Isaiah prophesied "in the days of Uzziah," while this vision was seen in the year that he died. But it is not the case that the prophecies are always arranged in chronological order. Chapter i. must, from the nature of its contents and the state of things it describes, have been of later date than Chapters ii.-iv.; and the dated prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are not given in the order of time (Comp. Ezek. xxix. 1 with xxvi. i.; xxxi. 1 with xxix. 17; Jer. xlvi. 2 with xliii. 8, &c.) On the other hand (Chap. i. 1), "in the days of Uzziah" is sufficiently explained if this prophecy was delivered before Uzziah died, although, of course, Chapter vi. cannot have been *written* till after his death.

The Chapter records, therefore, the first mighty sweep of inspiration that came over Isaiah's soul, and bound him to God as his witness and accredited messenger for the rest of his lifetime. It was his first experience of the irresistible inner pressure of soul that overpowers all hesitancy and all scruple on what account soever, and compels to speech—and to speech in God's name.

We need not spend much time in reflecting on the mere form of the prophecy—on the fact that it is presented as a vision; what we need to care for is the Prophet's meaning. No doubt it is remarkable that this is the only case in Isaiah's prophecies where a

vision occurs as a mode of prophetic revelation : a fact that raises a somewhat interesting question, on which there has been much discussion, viz., whether the actual process of revelation, or only the Prophet's mode of presenting the revelation, was here different from the ordinary. That is to say, did the Prophet actually see and hear all this exactly as it is narrated ; or did he merely throw his own complex experiences—his fears and doubts and struggles and God's way of meeting them—into this artistic shape as one that would render them most intelligible and impressive to his hearers ? This question is of great interest and some importance ; but there seem to be no sufficient data on which to base a very confident opinion on either side. In favour of the supposition of real vision, there are mostly only *a priori* deductions as to what must be the nature of Divine revelation, and more especially the mechanical theory of inspiration, which makes the prophets mere involuntary instruments in God's hand. But in that case any one might be a prophet ; whereas we find that prophets are taken exclusively from the men of genius of their time. All that needs to be held to, in order to conserve the trustworthiness and truth of the Bible as a revelation, is this, that the literary form chosen by the Prophet gives no incorrect representation ; that his experience and the contents of the written vision really correspond, when the vision is understood as he meant it to be. To this extent we must argue for the vision being held to be *real*, but not beyond this. It seems to us quite enough if the Prophet has thrown his complicated experience, extending perhaps over weeks or months, into the picture before us. And his prophetic insight and inspiration guarantee to us the correctness

of the picture, when we understand it as he understood it. Whether the imagery of the vision was ever presented to the Prophet's mind as one whole in its present shape, in a dream or reverie, will probably never be known, and is of no consequence. It suffices us to know that the meaning is real experience. Were we to insist on holding that all this must have been seen, because it is said to have been seen, we should soon be involved in difficulties with other scriptures, for "no man hath seen God at any time."

The scene of the vision is laid, most probably, in heaven; for the word "temple" (Verse 1) means "palace" also, and could be applied to the heavenly palace; whilst "on a throne high and lifted up" would have been replaced by "between the cherubim" had the earthly temple of God been meant. Yet because the elements of all human representations of the unseen must be supplied by what is seen, the heavenly palace is conceived merely as a kind of duplicate of the earthly temple, especially as the same Hebrew word names both. The one has "an altar" (Verse 6), "doors, and posts" (Verse 4), "winged creatures surrounding God" (Verse 2), and choirs that praise God's glorious holiness (Verse 3), just as the other. The Israelites called their temple "God's house," "where he delighted to dwell;" and although they knew that this was but a figurative description, and that only God's presence to spiritual experience was meant, still they could not help being influenced by this custom when they wanted to form some conception of God's heavenly dwelling-place. They would naturally conceive it with the forms and divisions and arrangements with which they were familiar in the earthly house.

The throne is "high and lifted up," and his flowing royal robes "fill the temple:" the whole appearance of Jehovah is majestic and imposing beyond an earthly king's (Verse 1). "Beside him stood the seraphim:"  $\text{לְיָמֵי}$  is not "above it," but indicates the position of servants waiting on their lord, as  $\text{לְיָמֵי}$  very often does. (See 1 Sam. iv. 20; 2 Sam. xx. 11; 1 Kings xxii. 19.) They seem to be arranged in two rows, at Jehovah's right and left (*cf.* 1 Kings xxii. 19), for their praises are responsive: "one kept crying unto another, and saying, Holy, Holy," &c. The seraphim cover their faces and feet in reverential awe: they are unworthy to be seen by Jehovah, so great and holy is He. "The house is filled with smoke," as the earthly temple usually was when God descended to communicate with men.<sup>1</sup>

The immediate effect of the vision on Isaiah was an overpowering consciousness of his sinfulness, and a fear of instant death at the hand of God (Verse 5). It was apparently a universal belief among the ancient Hebrews that the sight of God would be instant death to a man. We see this clearly in the fear of Gideon when he discovered that his unknown visitor was "the angel of the Lord" (Judg. vi. 22): so with Manoah (Judg. xiii. 22) and Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 30: See also Exod. xxiv. 11, and Gen. xvi. 13).<sup>2</sup> The Greek myth of Jupiter and Semele, and the Greek ideas about *νεμφοληφία* shew that similar views were not unknown even outside of Israel. And among the Hebrews this doctrine is not due to revelation: it appears in the history always as a tradition inherited from remote antiquity—a natural outgrowth of the natural consciousness of sin.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11; Ezek. x. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Where the most probable rendering is, "Do I still see (*i.e.*, live) after my seeing [God]?"

It forms a strange illustration of the knowledge man has always had of his own guilt in God's sight, and the danger of Divine punishment he constantly lies under. Man cannot conceive God appearing to him for any other purpose than to execute judgment; so pure is God, so impure is man! This belief may have degenerated with many into a mere superstition, a blind belief whose meaning and reason was forgotten; it seems little better with Manoah. But it is not so with Isaiah. He knows well the reason of his danger: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips." He feels his own sin, and feels his solidarity with a nation that is sinful too. God's mind towards the whole nation must be one of wrath and threatening, unmitigated by the presence of righteous persons to leaven the mass. (See Gen. xviii. 23-33.)

But he had not long to wait for a sign of mercy and pardon (Verse 6). "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having in his hand a hot stone, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar." The thing denoted by *הַבִּיטָה* is peculiarly Oriental, belonging to a state of society that has now passed away in the West; and hence we have in English no word that properly translates it. The rendering of the Authorized Version, "a live coal," *i.e.*, a burning log (for of course in those days the fuel was wood), is totally wrong, and, indeed, the conception is too grotesque to be for a moment entertained. The *הַבִּיטָה* is a stone kept in all ancient Oriental households as a means of applying heat to household purposes. In order to bake cakes (*cf.* 1 Kings xix. 6, "cake baked on the hot stones"), or to roast flesh, the stone was first heated in the fire, and the wet dough or the flesh spread out upon it, the stones

as they grew cold being exchanged for hot ones fresh from the fire. To boil milk, the hot stone was plunged into it when contained in the leathern skin that served alike as cauldron and pitcher. In short, the heated stone was a primitive means of applying fire wherever fire was needed. The Prophet, carrying the similitude of an earthly household into the heavenly palace, assumes the presence of such an utensil on the hearth, which here of course must be conceived as an altar, on the model of God's earthly dwelling-place. A seraph takes the hot stone from the altar and lays it on the Prophet's lips, which he had himself mentioned as the special seat of sin, and announces to him also in words the forgiveness of his guilt: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

This symbolic act of the angel would perhaps be quite intelligible to the contemporaries of the Prophet; but it is undoubtedly very obscure to us. The act is intended to shadow forth in some way the cleansing of the Prophet from sin; but what is the connection between such cleansing and the touching of Isaiah's lips with the stone heated on the altar fire? What is the *tertium comparationis* of the symbol?

The stone is a means of applying fire, as we have seen; when, therefore, it is brought to the lips of the Prophet, it is the same as if the whole altar-fire had been brought there; and that again is the same as if the Prophet's "unclean lips" had been laid on the altar. The everyday use of the stone would at once suggest this to the mind of Isaiah's hearers. The angel's act, therefore, is as much as to say: "Lo, I lay thy sinfulness on the altar-fire; and thou art cleansed

from sin thereby." But how should laying on the altar cleanse from sin? Gesenius, in his Commentary, compares Malachi iii. 2, 3 ("a refiner's fire"), and refers us to the belief, so widespread in antiquity, in the purifying power of fire. But, even if this were not too mechanical, and almost too magical, to satisfy us, laying on God's altar-fire irresistibly suggests sacrifice; and we can hardly suppose that the Prophet did not, in some way, have sacrifice in his mind. It is to be presumed, at the very least, that the meaning of the Prophet is not different from what he believed to be the meaning of sacrifice. Now, whatever differences of opinion there may be regarding other parts of the sacrificial ritual, all schools agree that the laying of the sacrifice on the altar and burning it, in whole or in part, signifies its presentation to God. The sacrifice is given to God by being burnt; no one supposes that the burning is to purify or "refine" it. The idea of purifying is totally irrelevant to the laying of sacrifice on the altar-fire. To lay on the altar is to give up to God—to make wholly his. Here, then, the angel says to Isaiah in substance this: "Thy sin-defiled nature" ("lips") "I lay on God's altar. I make it all his again. The uncleanness of thy nature consisted in its opposition to God, for all sin is selfish action, as opposed to action for God, and now all the opposition of thy nature to God is taken away. Thy nature is, by this act, devoted wholly to God. By Divine power thou hast been suddenly, miraculously, turned into one from whom all selfish thoughts and words and deeds are taken away, into one whose every thought and desire is toward God; into one wholly consecrated and devoted to God; and therefore into one wholly pure."

All this is done only in symbol, of course; not in reality. What the Prophet receives is in truth only God's twice-repeated assurance that He *looks on* the Prophet as one thus cleansed and devoted; that He *overlooks* the Prophet's past sins; that He *imputes* to him the purity of consecration; or, in short, that God pardons and forgives him. The essential core of the idea of forgiveness, in the New Testament as well as in the Old, is just this, that God treats guilty but penitent men as if they were not guilty, with a view to freeing them from their guilt, and making them righteous. Isaiah conceives of his forgiveness under forms familiar to his time. He, a sinful man, is laid on the altar of God, and made wholly clean in God's sight, whatever the imperfections that may still cling to his nature, whatever selfishness or self-will may still mar his reconciliation to the will of God.

Of course, however, the change of will—from a self-ward to a God-ward direction—does not long continue merely imaginary, or in symbol only; for, in all time, God's treatment of men as if their wills were devoted to Him, God's loving forgiveness of men's sins, has been the chief means of subduing man's will to Him in actual fact. He who has been forgiven does become what God has already treated him as being—a man whose life is devoted to God. "Ah, Lord! for I am thy servant. I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid (*i. e.*, thy homeborn slave, wholly thy property); *thou hast loosed my bonds*" (Psa. cxvi. 16). Forgiveness awakes love to God, and love to God is the fulfilment of the law. This soon appears in Isaiah's vision. No sooner has he received the assurance of Divine forgiveness, than he hears the Divine call for a messenger: "Whom

shall I send, and who will go for us?" and he answers at once, "Here am I, send me." God may be at a loss for men to bear his message, so long as they have not tasted of God's love; but one who has just been freed from death, and has received a full pardon, is his for whatsoever service He may need him. And so Isaiah is called to be a prophet, and has consented to the call.

So far regarding God's engagement of Isaiah for the prophetic office, if such a phrase may be permitted. But let us pause here to ask why the Prophet thought it needful to publish this account of his call. For whether the vision came to him as a whole, or was, in so far as concerns its form, the fruit of his creative activity as a poet, there is as yet nothing but a private transaction between God and Isaiah. Why was it needful to publish that? The only reason we can conceive of is that the Prophet needed to give a justification of his public assumption of prophetic work. And that implies in the community a suspicion of prophetic men, and in the young Prophet's mind struggles and hesitation such as we can easily conceive. He had, perhaps, for long been marking the irreligion and wickedness of his countrymen, and in his soul had heard God denouncing woe after woe upon them for their iniquity; but should he take it upon him to give forth such prophecies? Would they not laugh the stripling out of all countenance, if he should put on the prophet's mantle? Would they not scoff at and scorn him? Could he bear their persecution? Could he stand the anger and disgust with which his worldly companions would greet him? Could he bear to be cried down as unpatriotic, prophesying woes to his own fatherland? But while he thus pondered over the diffi-

culties of the prophetic calling, and felt inclined to keep silence and leave prophesying to others, there rose before his mind again the royal majesty of Jehovah—the seraphim praising his holiness till the door-posts trembled; his own undone state in presence of a Judge like that; and then the gracious forgiveness that he received, announced in word and sealed by symbol; and he could not refuse to take up the irksome duty: nay, the duty ceased to be felt as irksome. And this picture of his call he holds up half before himself, as the answer to all the timid fears of his own heart, and half before his countrymen, as his reply to all the objections they might raise against his prophetic commission. “Keep silence I cannot! The message is Jehovah’s, not mine. Ye may say what ye will; I cannot help but prophesy: I am compelled to speak. God made me his willing slave by that act of free forgiveness; since then I listen not to flesh and blood, I am my Lord’s. The responsibility for the message is his. Whatever He bids me do, that will I do; I have no will of my own. He saved me from death.”

We venture to think that the vision is best interpreted by treating it as the response to some such questionings and scruples as these. They could not but arise when Isaiah felt called on to speak to his fellow men in Jehovah’s name. The poetic power of the piece is a sign of the extent to which the Divine promptings had filled and roused his spirit, a measure of the intensity of the struggle between human inclination and Divine inspiring power.

This mode of interpretation is strongly confirmed when we proceed to look at the message which the Prophet is sent to deliver (Verses 9, 10).

Go and speak to this people,  
 Go ye on to hear, but do not understand,  
 And go on to see, but do not perceive :  
 Make thou the heart of this people fat,  
 And make their eyes heavy, and blind their eyes ;  
 That they may not see with their eyes or hear with their ears,  
 Or reflect in their heart, and repent, and be healed.

The force of the infinitive absolute placed after the verb in Verse 9 seems to be, "Hear ye ever on," or "go on hearing." (See Ewald's *Lehrbuch*, § 280b, p. 49 ff. in Mr. Kennedy's Translation.) "To make the heart fat" is to make it inaccessible, unimpressible. (Comp. *Psa.* cxix. 70 and the frequent phrase "uncircumcised in heart, *Deut.* x. 16, &c.). The word we have rendered "blind" is a strong metaphor; it is, literally, "paint over, besmear," so as to shut out the light.

It is clearly impossible to understand this passage literally; it is strongly figurative on the very face of it. God does not send men prophets with the intention of increasing their hard-heartedness and guilt. God never can desire the increase of guilt or do anything to promote it; "judicial blinding" is but a convenient figure of speech that conceals our ignorance. But conceive the young Prophet wrestling with Divine convictions that he was impelled to announce, and yet held back, as we have supposed, by the fear of persecution. Was he not also deterred by the thought of how many prophets Israel had already had? Why should he add another to the unsuccessful attempts already made? Why should he increase the sin of the people by giving them another series of Divine messages to disregard and reject? They were so accustomed to seeing God's wonders, and hearing his words, that prophecy produced no impression upon them. Its only result could

be to make them more callous and unimpressible than ever, to lessen still more the chance of arousing them. But then the Divine reply is, "Be it so: I want thee to prophesy nevertheless. I want thee to harden their hearts by one more warning. I do not send thee with any hope or expectation of success. If you fail to bring them to repentance, it will not surprise me." And the Prophet, in announcing this to the people, tells them that he prophesies simply *because Jehovah bade him*, not hoping for success, or looking for it; nay, willing to find his success in failure. Hitzig (see his Commentary, *in loco*) thinks it impossible that Isaiah could have begun his career with so despondent a view of his work; and therefore he places this Chapter late in the Prophet's life. But we venture to think that a very low estimate of what one is likely to accomplish is not uncommon or unnatural in workers for God; and, moreover, that it is not at all the worst state of mind to commence really successful work in.

But this is only half the meaning of the message; it has a reference also to the people. It is the first word of warning that God sends them by the new voice. And a terribly awakening message it was, doubly forcible because of its indirect form: "I come as God's messenger among you; but not to call you to repentance. No, your treatment of such messages hitherto has made even God despair of you. You have been often warned that death is the result of your conduct; and I come not to warn you again. That were useless: I come only to seal your doom. You have always put off repentance to a more convenient season; and God, in anger, has sent me to seal up the fountains of repentance in your hearts, lest

ye should escape the doom ye have merited." God foresees that Isaiah's prophetic activity will only harden and sear, not bring to repentance; and yet in love and mercy He sends a prophet with one last warning, so that, by a strong figure, He may be said to intend and desire what is the most likely result of the Prophet's work. And for the Prophet to represent God as actually no longer inviting men to repent, but only desiring their greater condemnation, was a new and most forcible call to repentance for men who had rejected many previous calls. It was like digging a grave for a man in his own sight, after you have failed to convince him by word that his course of conduct must end in death. It brought the far-off results of men's behaviour most vividly before their eyes. It roused them to thought by the unwonted cry that the hour of repentance was past.

Our Lord quotes and uses this passage, in the Septuagint translation, in exactly these two senses (Matt. xiii. 12-15), as his reason for teaching by parables. Professor A. B. Bruce has well shewn that parabolic teaching was almost a last resort with Christ; and that it indicated a despondent mood of mind, consequent on the ill-success of his earlier teaching. "The position of Christ," he says, "when He uttered the parables, was that of one found fault with, misunderstood, or despairing of being understood; conscious of isolation, and saddened by the lack of intelligence, sympathy, and faith on the part of those among whom He exercised his ministry." And yet, saddened as He was, He desired to give one last and most forcible warning. He found himself in circumstances exactly similar to Isaiah's, and hence his adoption of Isaiah's words.

The Prophet cannot venture to intercede for the people, nor does he dare to give vent to his sorrow over the need of this stern message save by the words, "How long, Lord?" How long shall I have this painful and fruitless duty to perform? And the answer is at the same time the most telling description of the coming ruin (Verses 11-13).

Till cities are lying waste with no inhabitants,  
And houses with no men :  
And the land is laid waste and desolate,  
And Jehovah has removed men far away,  
And the forsaken space in the midst of the land is great :  
And if there be still in it a tithe,  
Then it again shall be to consume.  
But like the terebinth or the oak,  
Whose stock remains when they are cut down,  
Its stock shall be an holy seed.

A great succession of desolating judgments was to come upon the nation—by what agency, is not said; but no doubt foreign invasion is what the Prophet chiefly thought of. The nation would suffer a series of reverses in war, till, at last, the cities should be all untenanted, and the majority of the inhabitants carried away to other lands, according to the colonizing principles then in vogue. And if there should be left a tithe of the inhabitants, then over these also should the sword pass ("it shall again be to consume"); and but a fraction of even of this tithe would be found fit to be spared. But the intention of the sifting process was merciful. It was a necessary step in God's plan of purifying and redeeming the world. And as, when an oak or a terebinth is cut down, there still remains its stem in the earth, from which young and healthy shoots may again come forth (Job xiv. 7-9); so there shall be left a root or stem of Israel that shall survive

this cutting down of the goodly national tree; and this stem shall be "an holy seed," the beginning of a redeemed and sanctified kingdom of God.

The question, what events of the subsequent history are here prefigured, though it is one most commonly asked regarding a prophet's words, is one that least deserves consideration. It is worthy of notice that in the above Verses the Prophet does not seem to care so much about describing the special features of the coming judgments—the when, how, and where of each—as about emphasizing the fact that there will be severe and repeated judgments. His business as a prophet is the announcing of the great principles of God's government of the world with a view to redemption. He gives anticipations of the coming history only as to its *principles*, not as to particular events. Or at least he gives anticipations of particular events only in as far as they are needed to bring out the principles. He simply sketches, with a few bold strokes, the grand outlines of the Divine plans for redemption, or of some part of them. The essence of the present prophecy is this: Israel is the chosen seed of the universal kingdom of God—the redeemed and glorified humanity of the future. The hope of true religion is bound up with her. But for the present she has sunk into ungodliness and careless worldliness, and is unfit for her position. Judgment must weed out of her all those elements of opposition to God, in order to leave at last a real "holy seed." Success and wealth have brought ungodliness, and poverty and distress must restore them to righteousness. We do not suppose that the Prophet means to say that all the *wicked men* will be removed into captivity, and the

*good men* only left. (See on the contrary Jer. xxiv. 5-7.) He is dealing with the nation as representing the kingdom of God, and means to say that the coming judgments will weed out the worldliness and carelessness that prevail at present, will deepen true spiritual religion in Israel, and fit her to be the centre from which the truth and grace of God shall go forth to all the world.

The message came in the last year of Uzziah's reign, when for fifty-two years great prosperity had prevailed. Uzziah had been a warlike and successful king. He had subdued and rendered tributary several of the neighbouring nations, *e.g.*, Philistines, Arabians, Mehunims, Ammonites (2 Chron. xxvi. 6-8). He had encouraged husbandry by digging wells and erecting towers to protect the peasants from marauders (*Ibid.* Verse 10). He had strengthened and beautified Jerusalem with noble buildings (*Ibid.* Verse 9), had created a large standing army (*Ibid.* Verses 11-13), and collected immense stores of the *matériel* of war, including newly invented projectile engines (*Ibid.* Verse 14). Moreover he seems, from his having rebuilt Elath, to have revived Solomon's commercial enterprise, by sending fleets to Arabia and India (2 Kings xiv. 22). No doubt, therefore, wealth and luxury abounded during his reign, and had produced their usual effects on the people. Worldliness and carelessness spread, and true religion declined.

The invasion of Judah by Rezin and Pekah, seventeen years after this; her deep humiliation by Sennacherib forty-six years after this; and the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, were all fulfilments of this prophecy. That is to say, they were instances of the

principle here laid down. They were cases in which worldliness was checked by judgment and suffering, and true religion deepened and revived. Prayer to God and faith were the chief weapons of defence against Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. ; Isa. xxxvii.), and the wondrous Divine protection of Jerusalem at that crisis attached the people more to God. The captivity, again, broke for ever the bonds of tradition that had made them cling to the unlawful ancestral worship of the "high places;" and it also rendered religion more spiritual and less ceremonial. Nor did the fulfilments of this prophecy cease with Nebuchadnezzar. We are quite justified in seeing in the repeated "consumings" of the tithe that returned, under the Syrian kings, and later under the Romans, on to the last catastrophe, but a still more distant succession of fulfilments. Each of these materially contributed to free the true religion from various temporary states of disease. Each broadened and deepened it; and at last the final fall of Jerusalem and of the nation was the means of de-Judaising Christianity, of putting an end for ever to ceremonial worship, and of opening for the new "holy seed," the Church of Christ, a course of glorious development.

Finally, let us remember that the Old Testament prophecies have their "fulfilments" even beyond Israel. Although given to Israel in the first instance, and expressed in terms derived from the form in which the kingdom of God existed in Israel, they are not instructions for Israel alone: they are not predictions of definite bits of future history, so that, when fulfilled, they either become obsolete altogether, or sink into mere seals and evidences of the Divine cha-

racter of the Bible. The Church has always instinctively claimed for them a universal character; as part of the oracles of God useful for instruction and reproof in all ages. It is only when we interpret these prophecies as *principles of Divine redemptive activity*, that this claim is set in its true light. A prophecy is a Divine message to the Church in Israel, and also to the Church in all similar circumstances. For God's *principles* of action can never change; He is immutable. This vision of Isaiah's, therefore, is not concerned only with Sennacherib or Nebuchadnezzar. Whenever the Church of Christ falls into hardened worldliness and neglect of true religion as a result of long prosperity, we may apply it, and confidently predict that judgment will come to awaken and arouse her. And when the suffering commences, we may just as confidently predict that the Church will not die under it, but leave her stem deep rooted in the earth, and "her stem will be a holy seed." The new shoots after the cutting down will be healthier and better than the old tree.

P. THOMSON.

---

TWO NEW TESTAMENT SYNONYMS,

Τῖος AND Τέκνον.

THE grace, scholarship, and delicate insight which Archbishop Trench has linked together in his treatment of New Testament synonyms, have all but won this sphere for him as an exclusive domain; and a searcher in the same region may well feel drawn to pause, lest his exploration should bear the semblance of encroachment. But the two words at the head of this article have missed the cunning hand which has so