

our study of the Old Testament is, the more clear and forcible does this aspect of Israel's religion become.

Then, again, it will always remain true, that spiritual and moral principles, like material organisms, are more easily understood in their germinal form. The religion of Isaiah, if we do not overlay it with a mass of traditional exegesis, represents fundamental aspects of all true religion in an elementary shape; the Psalms express the utterance of faith in its simplest embodiment. It requires no philosophy to feel this; and all experience shews that the Christian individual, whose own life runs through stages in many respects parallel to the history of the Church, can often find the precise message which his soul requires most readily in the elementary utterances of the Old Testament. Nor is there much risk that the devotional reading of the Old Testament will Judaize the Christian. For the ideal parts of the Old Testament are those which speak most directly to the heart of faith, and they are the very parts from which Jesus and the Apostles drew the support of their spiritual life.

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH. CHAPTERS XL.-LXVI.

IV. JEHOVAH, GOD OF ISRAEL, THE FIRST AND
THE LAST.

IN Chapter xl. the Prophet, in order both to comfort and to teach his people, set before them Jehovah, their God, the Incomparable, with sarcastic sidethrusts at the idols. Here it was the immeasurable power of Jehovah, the Creator, the Sustainer of creation, who shewed his might in commanding the movements of the stars and breaking up the most powerful combinations of men, that was made prominent. In comparison of this Being, or rather from the point of view of his consciousness of Himself, all things

recede into nothingness. And to confirm this conception of God the Prophet names Him the Holy One: "To whom then will ye liken me, saith the Holy One (*Kadosh*)?" Obviously, however, such a view of Jehovah, though it excludes all others from being thought of as gods, is not yet complete. For though this incomparableness or matchlessness of Jehovah, according to which He is God alone, was represented as shewing itself in sudden and destructive interferences in the world of mankind (xl. 23, 24), no account was presented of his general relations to the world. The Prophet proceeds to furnish this in Chapter xli. some verses of which may be quoted.

1 Keep silence before me, ye isles; and let the peoples renew their strength; let them draw near; then let them speak; let us come near together to judgment. 2 Who hath raised up from the east; calleth (him) in righteousness to follow him; giveth nations before him, and treadeth down kings; maketh their sword as dust and their bow as driven stubble? 3 He pursueth them, and passeth on safely,—a way with his feet that none hath trod. 4 Who hath wrought and done it? who calleth the generations from the beginning;¹ I, Jehovah, am the first, and with the last I am He.

5 The isles have seen it and are afraid; the ends of the earth tremble; they draw near and come (together). 6 They help every one his neighbour, and every one saith to his brother, Be of good courage. 7 So the carpenter encourageth the goldsmith, and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smiteth the anvil, saying of the soldering, It is good; and he fasteneth it with nails that it may not totter.

8 But thou Israel my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham that loved me; 9 thou whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the corners

¹ This is not clear English, but perhaps it expresses the original. The question, Who hath wrought? is not answered, the answer is self-evident, and the prophet appends in apposition to *who?* a larger definition of Jehovah, which generalizes the idea involved in the question. The sense will be little different if we suppose the question to be real and to receive an answer in the end of Verse 4.

thereof, and have said unto thee, Thou art my servant, I have chosen thee and not cast thee away; 10 fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I strengthen thee, yea I help thee, yea I hold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. 11 Behold all they that are incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded, they that strive with thee shall be as nothing and shall perish. . .

21 Produce your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forward your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22 Let them bring forward and declare unto us what shall happen. The former things, What are they? declare (them) that we may consider (them) and know their issue; or shew us things to come. 23 Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. 24 Behold ye are of nothing, and your work of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you.

25 I have raised up from the north, and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon my name: and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay. 26 Who hath declared it beforehand that we may know? and beforetime that we may say, He is right? yea there is none that declared, yea there is none that shewed, yea there is none that heard your words. 27 I first give to Zion (one saying), Behold! behold them! and to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. 28 And when I look there is no man, and among these there is no counsellor, that when I ask of them can return an answer. 29 Behold all of them, their works are vanity and naught, their molten images wind and confusion.

The passage is connected with the preceding by the phrase "renew their strength." Chapter xl. ended with saying, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength," a word of encouragement and hope to Israel; this Chapter begins with, "Let the peoples renew their strength," a challenge and threat to the idol-worshipping nations. The Lord challenges the nations to enter into a plea with Him, to come with Him before a tribunal,

that decision may be given between them. This is a mere form of speech, a favourite forensic figure, employed for the purpose of setting forth in a lively manner the cause of the Lord and his people on the one side, and the cause of the idol-worshippers and their gods on the other. The point in dispute is not specially referred to; any one can gather it when he considers who the disputants are. Nor, of course, is there any real tribunal before which the plea is argued, not even, as Rosenmüller suggested, the tribunal of Reason. The arguments which the Lord uses on his side are two: the raising up of Cyrus and his victorious career; and the prediction of this beforehand. Both of these things He claims to have done.

Verses 2, 3 have been somewhat differently rendered by different writers, though the general meaning is plain. The great subject spoken of is Cyrus. It is probable that the first clause of verse 2 is to be taken by itself, "Who raised up from the East?" just as verse 25, "I have raised up from the North and he is come"; the person raised not being named in either case. Others make the second clause relative, "Who raised up from the East (the man) whom righteousness calleth to follow it (or, Him)?" The order of words in the second clause is rather against this; and the idea that Righteousness calleth Cyrus to follow *it* is unnatural and hardly justified even by Chapter lviii. 8, while the Lord's calling of Cyrus to follow Him has its supports in Chapter xlv. 2, 13: "I will go before thee," and "I have raised him up in righteousness." On the other hand there is a want of concinnity in the expression, "whom Righteousness calleth to follow Him" (lit. to his foot), in this that the caller is one and the person followed another. If the relative construction be adopted, the best rendering would be: "Whom He calleth in righteousness to follow Him." To render the word "righteousness" here by "victory" or "success," is not to translate this prophecy, but to

write a different one. The questions here and in verse 4 may be taken as those in Chapter xl. 12, 18, requiring no answer, the answer being obvious, or the answer may be supposed given in the last clause of verse 4.

Verses 5-7 give a grotesque picture of the condition of the terror-stricken idolaters before Cyrus, their coming together for mutual help and encouragement, and their excited and assiduous manufacture of new idols—the gods by whom they expect to be delivered; see in illustration the passage Chapter xlvii. 12-15.

Verses 8-19. But Israel also is alarmed, and the Lord assures his people that they have nought to fear, for they are his servant, whom He has irrevocably chosen, and whom He holds fast by the right hand of his “righteousness,” just as He has called Cyrus, before whom they are alarmed, in “righteousness.” All they that oppose them shall perish.

In verses 21-29 the Lord returns to his controversy with the idol-gods (verses 21-24) and their worshippers (verses 25-29), for they are one. He challenges the idols to shew their godhead by predicting what will happen. This general demand is then broken into two, either to shew what former prophecies they had given forth, that they might be compared with their fulfilment and be seen to be prophecies, or to prophesy now things to come; or finally, to give any sign of vitality and power by doing aught, good or evil. They are silent, however; and therefore He pronounces his verdict upon them: “Behold ye are of nothing, an abomination is he that chooseth you.” The concluding verses (25-29) recapitulate the two arguments which the Lord uses in his own behalf, his raising up of Cyrus, and his having predicted his career; and, as the last verse shews, they are spoken with reference to the idol-worshippers: “Behold all of them, vanity and naught are their works” (*i.e.* their idols, the works of their hands). The

idol-worshippers are frequently challenged, as having gods among them and being their prophets, to utter or to shew that they have ever uttered some prediction, *e.g.* xliii. 9, xlv. 7, xlviii. 14.

A different sense is put upon the phrase "former things" in verse 22 by some interpreters, *e.g.* Delitzsch. They consider the phrase to mean not "former prophecies" or "things formerly predicted," but things still future though lying in the near future, and "former" in respect of other more distant future things. The question, though not of much importance in itself, has a bearing upon the position among events occupied by the Prophet. A comparison of the various passages makes it difficult to accept Delitzsch's view. First, the word "declare" does not mean in itself to *predict*; it derives this meaning from the connexion (*comp.* Chap. xlviii. 20). Again, to offer the idols the choice of predicting the near or distant future would really, in the sense which the Prophet attaches to "predict," be to give them no choice; the one is as difficult as the other. And in answer to Delitzsch's approving quotation from Hahn, that the "former things" denote "the events about to happen first in the immediate future, which it is not so difficult to prognosticate from signs that are discernible in the present," it must be said that to "prognosticate from signs discernible" is not what the Prophet means by "prediction," and neither what he claims for Jehovah nor what he demands from the idols and their worshippers; and to deny to the idol-worshippers the power of doing this would be to rate their intelligence a great deal lower than in many cases it must have been. And, finally, the interpretation referred to is contrary to the usage of language in this prophecy. The phrase occurs various times, and always in the sense of former predictions or things formerly predicted. In Chapter xlii. 9, "the former things, behold they have come, and new things do I declare." The "new things" are the

things over which all creation takes up a "new song," namely, the Restoration of Israel and the evangelizing of the nations through the Servant, who is a "covenant of the people, and a light of the gentiles." The "former things" are things now already accomplished. Again, in Chapter xliii. 9, "Let all the nations be gathered together, who among them will declare such a thing? or let them shew former things; let them give their witnesses that they may be found in the right. Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." The phrase, "Who among them will declare such a thing," *i.e.* the Restoration of Israel from the North and South (verse 6) means, "Who will give such a prediction of the future?" and this is set in contrast to, "or let them mention former things," *i.e.* former predictions, and bring forward witnesses to shew that they actually uttered such predictions (comp. Chap. xlv. 8). Finally, in Chapter xlvi. 3, it is said, "The former things I have declared from the past. . . . suddenly I did them and they came to pass. . . . I shew thee new things from now" (comp. verse 14 *seq.*).

The "former things," then, are things formerly predicted; and the choice given to the idols and their worshippers is either to point to such former predictions that they may be verified by comparison with events, or to shew things still in the future, for Jehovah can both refer to former predictions and predict "new things." It is probable that these former things are not instances of prophecy in the general history of Israel; they are prophecies belonging to the circle of events now transpiring; they are the earlier events in the great train of occurrences, the "new things" of which are the Restoration of Israel and the conversion of the nations. The Prophet indicates as much explicitly when he makes the Lord say, in reference to Cyrus: "Who declared this from former times?" (Chap. xli. 26.) And the same appears even more clearly

from the passage Chapter *xlvi.* 14 *seq.* It is an interesting question, When were these predictions in regard to Cyrus and Babylon uttered? or To what is it that the Prophet refers? Such predictions certainly do not belong to this Book. On the contrary, the events predicted are already partly fulfilled, so far fulfilled indeed that the Prophet sees their complete fulfilment and argues from it. The passages have an interest as indicating where precisely the Prophet stood in the march of events, what "former things," already virtually accomplished, lay behind him, and face to face with what "new things" he felt himself to be standing. This new and greater evolution, at the starting point of which he stands, the Prophet indicates by the word *now*, of which he makes such frequent use, *e.g.* Chapter *xliii.* 1, where the transition is made from Israel's present condition of "a people robbed and spoiled" to her universal restoration from every corner of the earth; similarly *xliv.* 1; so *xlvi.* 16, "And now hath Jehovah sent me with his spirit;" and *xlix.* 5, where the Servant of the Lord feels his failure to be a thing lying behind him, and his great double task in Israel and among the nations about to be crowned with success.

To come, however, to the main idea of the Chapter. It is evident, to begin with, that from the more abstract delineation of Jehovah the God of Israel, given in Chapter *xl.*, the Prophet descends in this Chapter into the field of history and events. It is the march of Cyrus and other great transactions now occurring that engage his attention. In a dramatic way he introduces Jehovah, God of Israel, putting two questions to the idol-worshippers, "Who raised up from the East?" and "Who declared it from afore-time?" This is but the Prophet's manner of expressing his own thought of Jehovah. His own consciousness of Jehovah, God of Israel, interprets these events to him; and he exhibits this consciousness in a dramatic way before his

people to elevate their minds to the same lofty plane of thinking of their God as he himself occupied, that he might inspire them with hope and faith: for the events occurring are in truth working out their salvation, only faith on their part is essential to secure it: "Oh that thou wouldst hearken to my commandments, then should thy peace be as a river" (xlviii. 18). The Prophet is not interested in *proving* anything about Jehovah to his people. Prophecy in his day was far beyond the stage of seeking to prove; this indeed was not at any time its task. He unfolds before them his thought of Jehovah; if it were only also the thought and feeling of his people, how near and full their salvation would be! Ewald inscribes the Chapter, *The false gods and their people*; Delitzsch, *The God of the world's history, and of Prophecy*. The two inscriptions supplement one another. Ewald's, however, instead of expressing the primary thought, expresses rather what is the immediate antithesis of it, the idea which the primary thought suggests as the other side of it. This reflection of the primary thought certainly receives expression towards the end of the Chapter, where the idea is suggested that the nations, having no true God as the source of light and life to them, have no destiny or future before them, at least no future which they will be able to develop out of the powers within themselves; for the Prophet considers the source of all development among a people to be the Deity among them. The nations have a destiny, but they must receive help from without in order to reach it. And this idea is what leads immediately in the next Chapter to the thought of Israel's destiny and task, who is the servant of the Lord: "Behold my servant, I will put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the gentiles." While Delitzsch's definition, however, expresses more truly the primary thought of the Chapter, his exposition is defective in making the "world's history" and "prophecy" two

unconnected things, two independent proofs of Jehovah's Godhead. They are rather one, or two sides of the more general truth, that the Lord is "the first and the last." He initiates, and He winds up, all the movements of history. This is the idea under which the prophet desires his people to place the march of Cyrus and the revolutions attending it. But this great God who is "the first and the last" is the God of Israel, who saith not to the seed of Jacob seek ye me in the waste, in uncertain and undeterminate conditions, "Jehovah doeth nothing, but he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets" (Amos iii. 7). Jehovah is the absolute, the Holy One, but He has become the Holy One of Israel—contradiction almost as it seems. The great movements in history are not sporadic exhibitions of the power of a Being who has given no clue that can lead to the comprehension of Him. They are steps in the evolution of a great purpose, and this purpose has been revealed to Israel from of old, for Israel is the Lord's servant in carrying it out. If Jehovah is the first and the last, He foresees his own great operations; it is, however, his relation to Israel that makes Him prophesy them. Thus events and prophecy go hand in hand, the one is but the reflection beforehand of the other; both are but one manifestation of the God of Israel, the first and the last, and of his designs of grace with the world. Therefore the Prophet when he insists on the fact that the Lord prophesies usually couples his operation also with it; *e.g.* Chapters xliii. 9 *seq.*, xliv. 6 *seq.*; especially Chapter xlviii. 12-16:

Hearken unto me, O Jacob; I am the first; I am also the last. All ye assemble yourselves and hear; which among them hath declared these things? He whom Jehovah loveth will do his pleasure on Babylon. I, even I, have spoken; I have brought him, and his way shall prosper. . . . I have not spoken in secret from the beginning.

And even more pointedly in the passage, Chapter xlvi. 9-11 :

Remember the former things from of old, for I am God, and there is none else ; from the beginning declaring the end, and from ancient times things not yet done ; saying, My counsel shall stand, . . . calling a ravenous bird from the East, from a far country the man of my counsel.

This, then, is the great thought of Chapter xli., as these supplementary passages expound it, the thought that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the First and the Last ; that the events that happen are but fragments of the great movement which HE is leading on toward the goal of his counsel ; and that prophecy is the reflection of them, flashes of light from the self-conscious and self-consistent Intelligence, the eternal Light, who has condescended to dwell and to shine in the bosom of Israel.

The doctrine of God in these prophecies is a very highly developed one, on some sides even more highly than in the Book of Job. Beyond a few words on the two expressions which distinguish these two chapters, viz. *Holiness* (Chap. xl.) and *Righteousness* (Chap. xli.), it is not necessary to go further into it. Much has been written regarding the progressive advancement of the idea of God in the mind of the people of Israel. This idea of advancement, though a great truth in Old Testament revelation, is in some danger of being overstretched. Though the conceptions entertained regarding God find broader expression in later prophets, the conceptions themselves are to be found in the oldest prophetic writings. At the period of the dissolution of the State, and during the Exile, closer contact with the nations and their false religions, and the seductive influence of these upon many of their own people, caused the Prophets to set the truth in sharper contrast to what was false, and thus not only to express their own doctrine of God positively, but to confirm it by express denial of that which was opposed to it. But otherwise the doctrine of God is the

same throughout all the prophetic writings. One may go further, indeed, and say that it is the same throughout the writings of the whole Old Testament, even the oldest.

There are some peculiarities in this doctrine which distinguish it from that of modern theology. For example, it never occurred to any Prophet or Writer of the Old Testament to prove or argue for the existence of God. To do so might well have seemed an absurdity, for all Old Testament writers move among ideas that presuppose God's existence. Prophecy itself is the direct outcome of his influence. The people of Israel, in their character and relations, are his creation. Scripture does indeed speak of men who say in their heart that there is no God; but these are the fools, that is, the practically ungodly, and their denial is not a theoretical or speculative one, but merely what may be held to be the expression of their manner of life. Even the phrase, "There is no God," hardly means that God is not, but that He is not present, does not interfere in life; and, counting on this absence of God from the affairs of the world and on impunity, men become corrupt and do abominable works (Psalm xiv.; Job xxii. 12). And for their wickedness they shall be destroyed from the earth, with all the nations that forget God. Yet even this forgetfulness of God by the nations is regarded as something temporary; it is a forgetting only, not an obliteration of the knowledge of God from the human mind, which cannot be; and these nations shall yet remember and turn unto the Lord.

As this is the case, Scripture has no occasion to speculate how the idea of God's existence arises in the mind. Its position is far in front of this, so to speak. It nowhere contemplates men as ignorant of the existence of God, and therefore nowhere depicts the rise or dawn of the idea of his existence on men's minds. The Hebrew comes, possessed of the conception of God, to face and observe the world, and his conception of God explains the world to him; the

world does not suggest to him an idea hitherto strange, that of the existence of God. There seems no passage in the Old Testament which represents men as reaching the knowledge of the existence of God through nature or the events of providence, although there are some passages which imply that false ideas of what God is may be corrected by the observation of nature and life. When the Singer in the nineteenth Psalm says, "The heavens declare the glory of God," all that he means is that the glory of God, who is and is known and is Creator, may be seen reflected on the heavens. But the Poet only recognized in the heavens what he already carried in his heart. When, however, Isaiah asks, "To whom then will ye liken me, saith the Holy One? Lift up your eyes and see, Who created all these?" he may go somewhat further, and teach that men's conceptions of God, who is Creator, may be intensified, or even clarified, by observation of his mighty works.

Naturally the Old Testament as little thinks of arguing that God may be known as it thinks of arguing that He exists. Its position, here again, is far in front of such an argument. How should men think of arguing that God could be known who were persuaded that they knew Him, and were in fellowship with Him, whose consciousness and whole mind were filled and aglow with the thought of Him, and who felt themselves moved and enlightened by his Spirit?

On all these questions the Old Testament has nothing to say; they are questions that lie behind its standing-point. When we come to the next question, however, viz. How may God be known? it has a very definite doctrine, that of Revelation. If man knows God, it is because He has made Himself known to man. All knowledge of Him is due to Himself who communicates, not to man who attains or achieves. The idea of man reaching to knowledge or fellowship of God through his own efforts is not that of the Old

Testament. God speaks, He appears; man listens and beholds. Moses and the Prophets are not philosophic minds, reflecting on the Unseen, and forming conclusions regarding it, or ascending to elevated conceptions of Godhead; the Unseen manifests itself before them, and they know it. Such a Revelation is everywhere supposed in the Old Testament.

It was said that this Prophet's conceptions of God, as exhibited in Chapters xl., xli., might be expressed by the two words, Holiness and Righteousness: "To whom will ye liken me? saith the Holy One" (Chap. xl. 25); "Thou Israel, my Servant, fear not; I hold thee with the right hand of my Righteousness" (chap. xli. 8-10). The one term "Holiness" refers to what God is in Himself; the other, "Righteousness," refers rather to his operations in Salvation and History.

Much has been written on this term "Holy." The meaning of the phrase is to be reached by observing the usage, not by inquiring into the meaning of the root. In all questions of this sort the Concordance, not the Lexicon, ought to be our guide. Again, the usage of the Prophets and the oldest historical literature, where the word is employed in its natural sense, should be followed, not that of the legislative elements of the Pentateuch, where the use of the word is technical and perhaps derived. Primarily, the word "Holy" is applied to God; its application to men or things is secondary, arising from its proper application to God. When applied to men and things, it describes them as belonging to God, as brought into the sphere of the *Divine*; but such a use could not be primary, it presupposes an original application of the term to God Himself. When applied to God, the word "Holy" does not describe a moral quality in the Divine mind; it rather suggests that in God which distinguishes Him from all else, men or false gods, viz. just *godhead*. Hence the term may describe any

action or expression of Jehovah, whereby He manifests Himself to be God. When the Prophet Amos represents Jehovah as saying, "I have sworn by my holiness," the expression is little different from this, "I have sworn by Myself, who am God." Hence the word became the highest expression for Jehovah's Godhead, for Godhead in the most absolute sense, as for example in Isaiah vi. (compare Hosea xi. 9, "I am *God* and not man; the *Holy One* in the midst of thee"). The phrase "Holy One of Israel," means the Holy One who is in Israel, whom Israel knows and alone knows, who Himself, being known only to Israel, receives name from Israel, and who confers on Israel that which having Him who is God alone within them must confer. But this relation to Israel is no element in the conception of "Holy" itself; on the contrary, the relation to Israel is rather a contradiction of the conception and a marvel. When Isaiah says, Chapter lvii. 15 :

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is The Holy One; I dwell in the High and Holy Place; but with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit :

the first half of the verse expresses the meaning of the Holy One, and the second half the additional element of *Israel*.

When it is said that Jehovah holds Israel by the right hand of his *righteousness*, and that He has called Cyrus in *righteousness*, it is evident that "righteousness" here is no attribute of God Himself. Nor can it be any retributive righteousness as an objective rule of dealing with the nations. But such expressions as "calleth Cyrus in righteousness to follow Him" suggest the idea of a rule or principle of some kind. This idea lies at the root of the term "righteousness." To be righteous is to be in conformity to a norm. Righteousness is such a conformity. The norm or standard may be of any kind, or at least of many kinds; but that is right or righteous in the sphere where such a stan-

standard exists which is in harmony with the standard. The standard may be consuetudinary law, or the idea of the Old Testament constitution, or the general moral code, or any other to which conduct should be conformed. When, therefore, it is said that Jehovah holds Israel by the right hand of his righteousness, that He has raised up Cyrus in righteousness, and that He is righteous and (therefore) a Saviour (chap. xlv. 21), the idea finds expression that in holding Israel, calling Cyrus, and saving, God is conforming to some standard. This is but the idea which was expressed in the name, "the First and the Last." It is suggested that God has a purpose and is carrying it out in all that He is observed performing, and that all his operations are in conformity to it. In most of the Prophets God's righteousness is conformity to the relation into which He has entered with Israel; it is a conformity to the Covenant. And considering the wide purpose which in this Prophet the Covenant has, being a Covenant with Israel for the ultimate salvation of the world, if we suppose this the meaning here, we shall not go far astray. This Prophet, however, is distinguished by his universalism; and there is a very remarkable passage which seems to give God's righteousness immediately a bearing as wide as creation (Chap. xlv. 18 *seq.*).

Thus saith the Lord that created the heavens (he is God), that formed the earth and made it (he establisheth it, he created it not a waste, he made it to be inhabited), I am the Lord and there is none else. . . . Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. I have sworn by myself, that to me every knee shall bow. Surely in the Lord is righteousness and strength.

One last point may be referred to. Though this Prophet's doctrine of God, of his unity and spirituality and majesty, is very lofty, there is no Prophet whose use of anthropomorphic expressions is so broad. Such anthropomorphisms

cannot lead us astray in regard to the conceptions of this Prophet ; but the combination in him of two such opposite methods of conceiving God suggests to us how we should estimate anthropomorphic language in other Old Testament writers, who may not have occasion to give expression to such pure and lofty general thoughts of God side by side with it as this Prophet does.

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EZEKIEL: AN IDEAL BIOGRAPHY.

III.

THE vision of the prophet had brought before him the manifold forms of idolatrous worship at Jerusalem. He has now to learn that the evil will not go unpunished, and to look upon the ministers of vengeance as they go forth to their dread work. The vision which he describes reminds us of the seven trumpets or the seven vials of the Apocalypse (Rev. viii. 2, xvi. 1), and probably suggested the symbolism of those visions. Seven men were seen to come forth from the northern upper gate of the Temple, one of them in the white garments of the priesthood. As the leader of those who, as the angels of God, are thus sent on their work of punishment, he appears in the character of a scribe as well in that of a priest, and wears, after the manner of the East (as seen, *e.g.* in many of the Nineveh and Kouyunyk sculptures), a writer's inkhorn and reed-pen suspended at his side. With these, as the sequel shews, he is to mark those who have not bowed the knee in the false worship of the time, and are therefore to be exempted from the punishment which falls upon the guilty. The command to spare or to smite comes from "the glory of the God of Israel." That glory had moved from the cherub, *i.e.* the place between the cherubim of the mercy-seat in the