

THE REVISED VERSION OF ISAIAH.

II.

THE second part of the Book of Isaiah (or let me call it 2 Isaiah) can now be somewhat better appreciated than before in its varied and distinctive beauty. The broad space between chapters xxxix. and xl. prepares the reader to expect something widely different from most of that which has gone before, and the frequent paragraph-divisions warn him to bestow special attention on the transitions of thought. One may hope that before very long some members of our increasing band of thoughtful though not erudite Bible-students will begin to treat the prophetic writings precisely as Bernhard Weiss has treated the New Testament books in his valuable *Biblical Theology* (Clark, Edinburgh), viz. as presenting more or less independent types of religious truth and belief. Certainly no book contains such a wide range of thought as the Book of Isaiah, and we may hope that students of doctrine will not wait for questions of date to be finally settled before they compare and contrast, to the exceeding profit of popular theology, the ideas and expressions of the several distinct portions which make up the so-called Book of Isaiah.

That the revision of Isaiah xl.-lxvi. is satisfactory from the point of view of the history of doctrine (or rather, of religious ideas), it would be too much to assert; and if I were to survey it in this aspect, my second article would be more unfavourable than justice upon the whole requires. I spoke just now of the "varied and distinctive beauty" of this part of Isaiah, or, for the public is surely ripe for the expression, not so much "Isaiah" as the Isaianic literature—on the question involved, there is no essential difference between critics, as Klostermann and Bredenkamp have recently shown in publications supposed to represent

the orthodox section of German theology.¹ It is primarily with the view of illustrating 2 Isaiah as a "literature" and as a work, which however composite be its origin, can charm and delight the reader, that this too brief paper is written, and if the meaning and history of religious expressions should now and then be brought into view, this will be only a subordinate feature of the article. The Revisers have left so much undone which from a theological student's point of view they ought to have done, that I could not enter into the religious phraseology of 2 Isaiah as I should have much liked to do.

It may seem to be unimportant whether, in xl. 3, we render, *that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye*, or, *that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness*. But if this fine piece of deeply felt rhetoric could only have been printed in parallel lines, every one would have seen that the one rendering was wrong, and the other right. Respect for ancient views of grammar can alone have prevented the Revisers from prefixing to the invisible speaker's proclamation, "Hark, one crieth!" Pass on to v. 9. There observe the two exegetical traditions; the margin of R.V. (=A.V. text) represents the one; the text expresses the other. Why the Septuagint and the Targum should have had this honour done to them, I do not know. Putting Hitzig aside, it seems to me that the most influential modern exegesis is in favour of A.V. Besides, *O thou that tellest*, etc., is a doubtful translation. More accurate would be, "O company that telleth," etc. But for reading in church it is certainly a bad exchange that we have made; lovers of rhythmical English will, I think, bear me out in this assertion. Another proof of the scholarship often to be found in the margins meets us in v. 24, where the text of R.V. (=A.V.) seems to make the prophet contradict him-

¹ See Klostermann, art. "Jesaja," Herzog-Plitt, *Realencyclopädie*, Vol. vi. p. 585, etc.; Bredenkamp, *Der Prophet Jesaja* (1887), p. 227.

self. In the next scene (chap. xli.) Jehovah Himself is the speaker, with the exception of the graphic "aside" of the prophet in *vv.* 5-7. It is melancholy that there should be no margin on *islands*; there is one, of course, at Isaiah xi. 11, but, considering that chapters xl.-lxvi. form (as the Revisers themselves suggest) a separate prophetic writing, the student needs a reminder that modern scholarship may be decidedly against the rendering piously retained in the text (cf. EXPOSITOR, 1887, 2, p. 451). In *v.* 2 the Revisers' correction seems to me scarcely intelligible. *To his foot* is Hebrew; the English equivalent is "to follow him." Nor am I sure that the ordinary reader can help misinterpreting the second half of *v.* 4. A.V. gave a semicolon after "last"; R.V. gives a comma. A.V. might be explained with substantial accuracy; R.V. lends itself best to an interpretation which is certainly not a possible one. The stops as they now stand almost compel one to take "I am he" as an answer to the question, "Who hath wrought and done it?" The consequence is that one of the most important theological statements of the prophet is made of none effect. It is true, that אֲנִי הוּא cannot be translated except paraphrastically. It means either "I am the only independent Being," or, "I am (ever) the same." Mr. Rodwell adopts the latter sense here, and with more justice perhaps at xli. 4. Krüger prefers the former paraphrase. His remarks on the place which such a statement occupies in the religious system of the prophet, may be consulted with advantage (*Essai sur la Théologie d'Ésaïe xl.-lxvi.*, p. 16. Paris, 1881).

I cannot help making one or two more objections at this point. *Raised up* in *v.* 5 is unfortunately an ambiguous word. The phrase recurs several times, and its meaning is better expressed by Mr. Rodwell's rendering "I have stirred up" (*i.e.* impelled to activity).¹ The second margin on the

¹ I am indebted to the author's kindness for a copy of the second edition of

same verse was inserted out of deference to some eminent commentators, but is for all that scarcely defensible; at any rate, many other omitted renderings had a far better claim to be recorded. That there are no marks of parenthesis opening *v.* 5 and closing *v.* 7, is a loss to the student. And if the graphic present is given in *v.* 3, why not also in *v.* 6? Mr. Rodwell's version is not open to this criticism; he boldly but not inaccurately gives the whole of this passage (*vv.* 5-7) in the present tense, except at the very beginning (where perhaps "have seen it" would be better than "saw it"). Verses 8-10 form one impassioned sentence in R.V. Our prophet is fond of such oratorical appeals, and the Revisers have done him full justice. In *v.* 25 an important correction of tense is made; the reference is not to time future, but to time present. Cyrus is come, and has begun his victorious career (hence, "cometh" might be better than *shall come*). *One that calleth* is perhaps right; but it is at least equally possible that Bredenkamp's emendation should be adopted, and that we should render the corrected text, "do I proclaim his name." This improves the parallelism, and is in harmony with passages like *xliv.* 3, 4; **N** and **ן**, **ו** and **ו** are for different reasons often confounded.

In chap. *xlii.* we meet with the first of those sublime descriptions of the Servant of Jehovah which makes this prophecy so specially memorable to Christians. Great care has been taken not to interfere more than was absolutely necessary with wordings so familiar and so sacred to the Church at large. In *vv.* 1-4 the only alteration is *in truth* for *unto truth*; doubtless for the sake of intelligibility. I should have preferred "truthfully" or "faithfully," since the preposition indicates that the preaching of the Servant is according to the standard of truth. Passing on to another striking but enigmatical utterance, we find one

his scholarly version of Isaiah (London, 1886), which has been carefully revised, but is unfortunately not free from printer's errors.

great improvement. The rendering *Who is blind as he that is perfect* (v. 19), has some ancient authority on its side; Symmachus gives *ὁ τέλειος*, Kimchi תְּמִים, and Ibn Ezra regards כְּשֵׁלִים as synonymous with צְדִיק “righteous.” None of these versions does justice to the linguistic usage nor to the conjugation (“Pual”), and the revisers have done well to substitute *Who is blind as he that is at peace with me* (more strictly, “that has been brought into friendship with me”). Comp. Job v. 23, “And the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee” [or, “rendered friendly to thee”]. Some readers may object to R.V. that it fails to produce a good parallelism. But “peace” and “friendship” imply a covenant, and the covenant between Jehovah and Israel stipulates for protection on the one side, and willing service on the other. “Who is devoid of sensibility like him who has been brought into covenant-relations to the great teacher and work-master?” This is not an unworthy meaning. But one misses a serviceable alternative rendering (for the two margins show no exegetical tact, and were probably only meant to warn the reader of the difficulty of the word). In the first half of the verse, we read, “(Who is) deaf as my messenger whom I send?” We seem to require in the parallel line some noun which shall describe the qualities of a faithful envoy. Now there is one quality which must take the precedence of every other, viz. quickness to discern the wishes of the sender. *Behold, as the eyes of servants are upon the hand of their master, and as the eyes of a maid are upon the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are upon Jehovah our God* (Ps. cxxiii. 2), this is doubtless the expression of the faithful messenger and servant—the ideal Israel. If so, “the God-devoted one” gives the sense more accurately than the rendering adopted by the Revision Company. Surely it is not a matter of indifference that this rendering has been ignored in the margin of R.V. Dean Bradley has well observed (*The Book of Job*, p. 41)

that the passive virtue of resignation is equally essential to Christianity and to Islam; Kingsley has even called Job "the first great Moslem." And does not the prophet's descriptive term "Meshullām" (it occurs in Ezra viii. 16, x. 15, 29 as a proper name) remind us forcibly that Bible-religion insists on what we call resignation as an active not less than as a passive quality of the soul?

I would couple with this, as I trust, not misplaced exposition a caution to the student against too easy emendations of the text. How plausible it seems to correct a *Mem* into a *Kheth*, and read, with the Jewish scholars Krochmal and Grätz, כְּמִשְׁלָח "as he that is sent" (comp. "my messenger whom I send")? But we purchase this plainness at a high price; we destroy, it appears to me, the fine proportions of prophetic description of the true Israel. Passing over several corrections of less significance, and warning the student not to neglect the margins at xlii. 21, xliii. 13, we arrive at a passage of much importance for the historical interpretation of the book. If A.V. be correct, the prophet looks back upon the capture of Babylon by Cyrus as past; if R.V., this event is certain, but is still future. If A.V. had been retained, a corrected exposition of 2 Isaiah would have been scarcely possible, for in xlv. 2 the breaking of the hundred gates of brass is represented as a mighty proof of predictive power. For the grounds of the correction, see Driver's *Hebrew Tenses*, p. 152. Whether *the ships of their rejoicing* is English, may be doubted. The late Prof. Weir of Glasgow even doubted whether, consistently with usage, we ought to render thus; certainly a margin, "Heb., their shouting" might suitably have been added. It is even doubtful whether the text is correct; at any rate, the context rather suggests the rendering "the ships of their lamenting." Possibly רִנָּה here may have both meanings, "rejoicing" and "lamenting," just as הִירָר does in Isa. xvi. 9, 10. A.V. v. 27 *interpreters* for *teachers* is a decided

improvement. The prophets and priests are regarded as representing Israel before Jehovah and Jehovah before Israel.

In chap. xliv. the margins deserve special attention (with the exception of that upon *declare* in *v. 7*). The retention of A.V. for *v. 7* is fatal to the intelligibility of the passage. Jehovah justifies His exclusive claims by the constant stream of prophecy proceeding from Him. From the point of view of apologetics there is hardly a more interesting passage in the book; but no one would guess this from the version which has been again sanctioned by the Revision Company. No one, I hope, will believe that it was sanctioned by a majority of the Revisers; that indeed would be incredible. Still the fact remains that for some reason or other the correct rendering failed to obtain a two-thirds majority—a fresh proof of the extreme difficulty of obtaining a faithful translation under the circumstances of the Revision.

Chap. xlv. contains one notable correction materially affecting the sense. It is in the second clause of *v. 9*, where A.V., as the italics show, virtually emends the text, by no means to the advantage of the reader. *A potsherd among the potsherds of the earth* means one of a collection of insignificant creatures (so the Peshitto took it; the Septuagint and Theodotion imply a curious misreading). I do not say that the translation is perfectly clear. As Prof. Buhl has pointed out to me, the sense which ought to be given to the imperfects is the potential—“What canst thou make? What canst thou beget? What canst thou bring forth?” The passage is strongly satirical. In spite of the fact that the very existence of the pot is a proof of the ability of the potter, the foolish thing presumes to question this. The application is obvious. To deny the capacity of Jehovah to preserve His people was tantamount to denying His capacity to create, and that He could create, Israel itself (the “ancient people” of xliv. 7, perhaps) was a speaking

evidence. V. 11 is also somewhat obscure in A.V. and R.V.; but there is no help for it if even a small emendation is to be forbidden.

In chap. xli. the archaism *your carriages* (v. 1) becomes *the things that ye carried about*. In v. 8, *show yourselves men* remains, though certainly the *στενάξετε* of the Septuagint gives a much more suitable sense. Long ago Dathe proposed *הִתְבַּשְׁשִׁי*, and since then Prof. de Lagarde and I have made the same suggestion independently; "be deeply ashamed" is surely what the context requires. The margin *stand fast* is philologically possible, but not the right expression here.

The next chapter is finely given in A.V., and has been carefully retouched in R.V. *Accept no man* (v. 3) gives one possible rendering; the root-meaning is "to strike (upon)," and so "to meet." We might also render "I shall not meet any man (who can prove his manhood in battle)," taking "man" in a pregnant sense, as in lix. 16, Jer. v. 1. This substantially agrees with Symmachus and the Vulgate. The American Revisers, however, prefer the rendering "spare no man"; this is certainly more energetic and therefore more suitable to such a context. It is supported by Gesenius, Ewald, Hitzig, and Delitzsch, and the choice seems to me to lie between this rendering and that suggested above.

In chap. xlix. the margins are again important as witnesses to a more scholarly rendering than has found its way into the text, or, shall I say? to the anxious care of the Revisers not to interfere too much with a book so familiar and so dear. In v. 10, *not as silver* has the support of the Vulgate (*quasi argentum*); it gives a fine meaning—God remembers that "we are but flesh," and does not try us "as silver," which is "purified seven times" (Ps. xii. 6). The devout reader gains much by this new translation. Literally, the Hebrew means either "in (the manner of)

silver," or "with silver"; the latter sense is here obviously unsuitable. Segond renders, "pour retirer de l'argent"; Reuss, "sans obtenir d'argent"; *i.e.* (as Ewald), "my refining did not result in the production of pure metal"; but what place has such a statement in this context? Students of doctrine will be attracted more by another passage in this chapter. The A.V. of *v.* 16 gives, "and now the Lord God (*i.e.* Jehovah), and his Spirit, hath sent me"; the R.V., "and now the Lord God hath sent me, and his spirit." What the student of doctrine will make of this, however, I do not feel sure. He will conclude either that the prophet had no particular meaning, or that the sense is that which he (the student) desires to get from the passage. No one can blame the Revisers for their caution; a body representing not merely scholarship, but churches, could not allow itself to give a definite view of a passage like this, which requires a preliminary judgment upon the history of doctrinal progress in the Jewish Church. Again and again we see how earnestly the Revisers have endeavoured to keep philology distinct from exegesis, and to give what the Hebrew words may reasonably be taken to mean apart from the complicated process of interpretation. And we can also see now and then how still more earnestly they have sought to keep their version doctrinally colourless. The result of their endeavours in both cases has not been entirely satisfactory. Philological cannot always be kept distinct from exegetical considerations, nor can a translator always evade the responsibility of a definite opinion as to the stage of religious insight at which his author has arrived. It would be interesting, but would take us too far away, to notice in some detail how individual translators have avoided the objections to which the Revision Company is justly liable. We may at least be thankful that the Hebrew order of the words is retained in R.V.

In xlix. 5 the Revisers have adopted the reading pre-

supposed by our earliest critical authority (the Septuagint), and also by Aquila and the Targum. It is noteworthy that the Massoreth includes this passage among the fifteen in which \aleph is written, and \beth ought to be read; no doubt this reading is the correct one (cf. Ps. c. 3). That there is no margin on *v.* 7, is a loss to students only; the English at any rate is clear enough. The French translators follow suit, Segond rendering weakly, "à celui qu'on méprise"; Reuss, "à celui qui est méprise des hommes." Yes; the sense is even too clear, but this may compensate for the unnecessarily obscure meaning given to many other passages both in A.V. and in R.V. The interesting margin on *v.* 17 gives an excellent sense; the reading has been adopted lately by Prof. Briggs (*Messianic Prophecy*, p. 400) and Prof. Bredenkamp (Wellhausen's orthodox successor at Greifswald). In *v.* 25 the marginal reading should still more certainly be adopted; and few persons would have found fault with the Revisers if they had discarded the obvious scribe's error which now occupies the text.

In l. 11, *gird yourselves* (i.e. equip yourselves, xlv. 5) *with firebrands* replaces the curious schoolboy rendering *compass yourselves with sparks*.

Chap. li. is now a fine piece of prophetic oratory; how much *v.* 19 is improved, both in sense and even in rhythm, if my own ear can be trusted! The margin on *v.* 6 will give rise to reflexions on the difference between classic elegance and primitive energy of diction; that on *v.* 15, to some surprise at the wide range of possible meanings of Hebrew verbs (*to stir up* and *to still* are both referable to a very simple physical root-meaning, on which see Delitzsch's commentary on Job xxvi. 12). "Stilleth" is philologically possible, though exegetically impossible; Sept. adopts this sense in Job xxvi. 12, though not here (obviously because different translators have been at work).

But that wonderful fifty-third chapter (with which lii.

13-15 is closely connected) beckons us, and we cannot pause again till we reach it. How carefully it has been done, will be apparent the more we look into it. *Deal wisely* is surely, from a modern English point of view more appropriate than *deal prudently*; the margin is equally allowable, and the faithful interpreter will admit that, as also in Jer. xxiii. 5, both meanings are probably intended. The parenthesis in v. 14 is a great help in such a complex sentence. *Sprinkle* could not but be left in possession, though no longer maintained by many philologists of distinction; *startle* is a suitable sense, though whether it can be justified except by the help of emendation may be doubted. The Septuagint gives *θανμάσσονται*, but whether this is a guess, or a rendering, or a paraphrase, cannot be determined. The troublesome and inaccurate futures have disappeared from v. 2. The comma in v. 3 not only testifies to the scholarship of the Revisers, but promotes the effective reading of the verse, and the important correction in the second half of the verse has been made with pious regard to the ancient rhythm. Hengstenberg, in fact, stands alone among modern critics in his advocacy of the "authorized" rendering. The correction in v. 7 does, I fear, spoil the familiar rhythm; but if we make a due pause at *oppressed*, the sound of the passage is not displeasing; and certainly we ought not to complain of the removal of a tautology. Perhaps too many readers will agree on the increased pathos of the close of the verse in R.V. In v. 8 the interpreters are greatly divided, but there could be no difference of opinion as to the wrongness of A.V. The margins give an adequate view of other possible meanings; but perhaps nowhere in Isaiah is paraphrase more called for than in this deep chapter. *Taken* for instance—what does this mean? Violently taken or kindly released? Our Revisers indeed have only avoided paraphrasing *generation* by inserting in italics the words *among them*. In v. 9 *he made* had of course to be altered.

The Hebrew simply means "one made," but for clearness' sake (because *his grave* followed) the Revisers preferred *they made*. *Because* has of course been changed into *although* (cf. Job xvi. 17). With great honesty the Revisers have recorded in the margin that the Hebrew has *in his deaths* (not, *death*), with a reference to Ezek. xxviii. 8, 10, which however seems to me only in point if we may correct בְּמָתִי into בְּמִמָּתִי. The margin gives the literal meaning of an important religious phrase, and one may add, is the more suitable rendering in this context. It is God that justifies (Isa. 1. 8, Rom. viii. 33 A.V.); it is the privilege of His greatest servants to "turn many to righteousness" (Dan. xii. 3). The antithesis at the end of *v.* 12 (comp. those in *vv.* 4, 7, 10) would be more pleasing to the ear if *bare* had been changed into *had borne*; then a slight pause might be made by the reader after *he*, and the full force of the contrast would be brought out.

I turn to another specially difficult section (lvi. 9–lvii. 14), and may remark in passing how carefully the paragraph divisions have been framed in R.V. Some readers would perhaps desire to break up some of them, but whether the instructed student would agree in this, may be greatly doubted. In lvii. 12, *from his quarter* is cleverly corrected into *from every quarter*, with the margin *one and all*, which gives the true sense. The close of the verse is still more improved; how often has *and much more abundant* grated on one's ear in church! it reminds one a little of the *durable clothing* at the end of chap. xxiii. (A.V. and R.V.). *A day great beyond measure* is a big phrase which suits the tone of the speakers. In lvii. 6, *valley* is substituted for *stream* to the great advantage of the local colouring; of course, the torrent beds are meant (the wādys) which form a common feature in the Palestinian landscape. In lvii. 13, the vigorous marginal rendering should be noted; it is equivalent to a paraphrase, and more such margins might,

but for considerations of space, very probably have been added. *Faint away*, for *fail*, is another such margin (lvii. 16). In lviii. 10 shall I call the margin an explanation or a new rendering? Certainly I do not understand A.V., with which the text of R.V. agrees. In lviii. 13 the removal of a comma is as useful as its insertion was in lii. 3.

In lix. 10 note the vigorous clause which concludes the verse in R.V. Doubtless the phrase is somewhat obscure; yet the context and the comparison of xxii. 29, xcii. 15, suggests the rendering of R.V. (fatness being taken as a symbol of strength). The margin is probably given *pour acquit de conscience*, not on the ground of its probability; is there any such root as **דַּחַךְ** to be dark? No doubt some early exegetical authorities support this rendering, which we find as early as Jerome (who renders, *in caliginosis*); but Rabbinical tradition like the traditional renderings of other literatures, needs the most careful testing. In v. 16 the margin again gives the true sense, but perhaps a point of contact with liii. 12 seemed desirable. Verse 19 in R.V. is one of the most striking and poetical which I can remember. I do not deny that the A.V. may also be described by these epithets; unfortunately it has been given up by the unanimous voice of critics.

In lxii. 6 I am thankful for the promotion of the splendid phrase *the LORD'S remembrancers* from the margin (see A.V.) into the text. It may be illustrated by the custom of crying aloud in the words of Ps. xlv., "Awake, why sleepest thou, O LORD," which was at length abolished by John Hyrcanus (Talm. Bab., *Sota*, 48a; comp. Perowne, *The Psalms*, i. 207). I quite feel with John Hyrcanus that there is a certain want of faith in the idea of "reminding" or "awakening" Jehovah; at the same time, a phrase like this stirs one's feelings of sympathy. It may be better for us too sometimes to remind Jehovah (why may we not

use the word intelligently?) of His promises. When we have recited them, perhaps we shall believe them more intensely, and no longer think that Jehovah has forgotten or rejected us.

The above may suffice as specimens of the manifold interest of the Revised Version of 2 Isaiah.¹ If it has turned out to be somewhat unequal, that is the inevitable result of the conditions under which the work was performed. This latter part of Isaiah, as rendered by the old translators, has so enshrined itself in the memory that we can hardly bear the well-meant alterations of scholarly hands. What we want is, as Mr. Matthew Arnold says, deeply to enjoy, and we instinctively feel that to enjoy a thoroughly revised version, would involve close preliminary study, and an accustoming of the ear to new rhythms. We enjoy the English Bible of our fathers, and shrink from a change which may disturb our intellectual repose. I am not speaking, of course, in my own name. No one craves to enjoy the Biblical Literature more than I do, but it must be an enjoyment which has not first to excuse and justify itself at the bar of scholarship and truth. Nothing is so enjoyable as pure and primitive Biblical truth. "The words of the LORD are pure words" (Ps. xii. 6), and the labours of the Revisers will not be thrown away, if they induce the Church to look beyond theologies to the facts and words of the historic revelations.

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¹ I cannot, however, help pointing out, though but in a footnote, the corrections of the tenses in lxiii. 6, 74. The consonants of the text leave the tense open. Comp. Driver, *Hebrew Tenses*, ed. 3, p. 247.