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THE PRE-CHRISTIAN JEWISH INTERPRETATION OF ISAIAH LII., LIII.

THEOLOGIANS still debate the question whether the prophets of Israel recorded what they "saw," or "heard," in prophetic "vision," or committed their thoughts to writing under an influence felt to be an influence from above. The prophets "searched what time, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them" (1 Pet. i. 11). But the hearers and readers of the prophets were in a less favourable position to judge of the import of their words. They understood that a great Deliverer would come forth from David's royal line, be born in David's city, and sit upon David's throne. They believed that the second David would, like the first, deliver Israel from the hand of their enemies, subdue great nations, and reign in righteousness and peace.

But there were other "voices of the prophets," the meaning of which was not so intelligible. If the reader of Jacob's prophecy (Gen. xlix.) noted that to Judah was to belong "the obedience of the nations," he could scarcely help observing also that the promise made to the tribe of Joseph appeared grander in its import and was couched in a higher strain of poetry. He might be staggered when he compared the simplicity of the blessing pronounced by the great lawgiver on Judah (Deut. xxxiii.) with the warmth and glow of that poured out in the same poem on Joseph. Isaiah spoke of the great light springing up in Galilee of the

nations (chap. ix. 1, 2); Ephraim was styled in Jeremiah “the beloved son” of Jahveh (Jer. xxxi. 20).

There was enough in such “voices of the prophets, read every Sabbath” (Acts xiii. 27), to suggest the notion, afterwards enlarged by the fancies of tradition, that deliverance would arise out of Ephraim, as well as out of Judah. Hence the idea, afterwards more fully developed, of the two Messiahs, Messiah ben-Joseph who should precede, and Messiah ben-David who should follow after. Although that opinion was utilised in later days for controversial purposes antagonistic to Christianity, it is now acknowledged by many impartial expositors that the theory itself had its roots in traditional expositions which go back to the times before Christ.¹

To discuss satisfactorily the subject just touched upon would lead us too far away from our present theme. But it must not be forgotten that Elijah, the greatest of the prophets, was a member of the kingdom of Ephraim, that is, of Israel in the narrower signification of the name. To that prophet was assigned in prophecy the full accomplishment of the task, unsuccessfully essayed by him in the days of Ahab, that is, of turning the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers (Mal. iv. 5). He was to unite the robe once torn into twelve pieces and separated into two portions (1 Kings xi. 29–32). The longing desire of the Hebrew prophets was that the great schism should be healed, and Judah and Ephraim should again become one. But the breaches of the house of David could only be built up by national repentance.

¹ See especially Dr. G. H. Dalman's work before alluded to, and also the interesting appendix on “Messiah ben Joseph,” in *The Yalkut on Zechariah, translated with Notes and Appendices*. By Edward G. King, B.D., Hebrew Lecturer at Sidney Sussex College, and Vicar of Madingley. (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell & Co., 1882.) Two very interesting articles on “Die Elias Sage” by K. M. Ittameier, appeared in Luthardt's *Zeitschrift für kirchl. Wissenschaft und k. Leben* for 1883.

The day of suffering had to precede the day of blessing. According to a current tradition (founded on a combination of 1 Kings xix. 16, Dan. ix. 24, and Mal. iv. 5), Elijah the prophet was to anoint Messiah the Son of David. Elijah himself was an "anointed" one. He was also a Ben-Joseph. His earthly life had been passed in suffering and privation endured on behalf of Israel. Moreover he did not suffer alone, but at the head of a godly band of prophets like himself, who sought to turn back the heart of the people to their God. In vainly seeking to perform that work, they were "slain by the sword," having often gone about "in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth" (Heb. xi. 37, 38).

As the enigma of Isaiah lii. liii. then presented itself to the Jews before the Christian era, and the question was asked "of whom speaketh the prophet this?" it seems to us that it was quite natural for them to seek to explain the prophecy as a summing up in one picture of the sufferings of the righteous. However unsatisfactory such a solution must now be regarded, the recognition of the fact that it was natural to seek for a solution in that direction may have no unimportant bearing upon the Jewish controversy of the present day.

The mystery of the sufferings of the righteous has always perplexed pious thinkers, even those of bygone days. Inspired writers have "by divers portions," been instructed how to alleviate the difficulty. In the great Book of Job the writer maintains, in opposition to current prejudice, that trials and sufferings are not always "signs" of Divine wrath, or the result of Divine punishment. Sufferings are, indeed, often inflicted for such purposes; but sufferings are also sent for the purification of the godly; and are, occasionally at least, permitted to occur, not so much for the

benefit of the sufferer, as for the advantage of the world, of angels, and of men, unto whom he is made a spectacle (1 Cor. iv. 9). The sufferings of Job, although ultimately beneficial to himself, for "to them that love God all things work together for good" (Rom. viii. 28), were, as the prologue of the Book of Job points out, mainly probative.

It is not surprising, therefore, that an exposition of Isaiah lii. liii. traced on such lines found favour in both pre-Christian and post-Christian times. Nor need it excite any wonder that in our own days, in which there is such a disposition to look lightly upon sin, and to view it no longer as "exceeding sinful" (Rom. vii. 18), Jewish controversialists, as in days of yore—in review of the sufferings of their nation in past times, or in sight of their continued ill-treatment—should be found ready to maintain that the theme of the prophet was the sufferings of the righteous nation of Israel, and the benefit accruing therefrom to the haughty but ignorant nations of the world.

One of the best specimens of this interpretation is found in the Treatise of the Talmud termed *Berakoth*, 5 a. It is as follows:—

"Raba said, or possibly, Rab Chisda:—If a man sees that chastisements come upon him let him, search his actions. For it is said, 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord' (Lam. iii. 40). And if he has searched and found nothing, then it (the chastisement) hangs upon neglect of the Law, for it is said, 'Blessed is the man that Thou chasatest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy Law' (Ps. xciv. 12). And if he has attended (to that point) and not found (anything wanting), it is evident that the chastenings are from love, for it is said, 'For whom the Lord loveth He reproveth'" (Prov. iii. 12).

"Raba said Raba Sechorah said Rab Huna said:—Every one whom the Holy One, blessed be He! delights in, He bruises him with chastenings, for it is said 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, He hath put him to grief' (Isa. liii. 10)."

The objection is then suggested whether—

"It is possible [in such a case] that he [the righteous sufferer] may not receive them [the sufferings] as [proceeding] from love." The

answer is that "the teaching [or, the Scripture] says: 'When his soul shall make a trespass offering' [Isa. liii. 11]."

And the remark follows that in such a case there must be knowledge evinced on the part of the sufferer.

"As a trespass offering is [offered] with knowledge, so the chastenings are with knowledge. [Quest.] And if he received them (thus), what shall be his reward? [Ans.] 'He shall see seed, he shall prolong days' [Isa. liii. 10]. And not that only, but his doctrine shall be established 'in his hand.' For it is said, 'the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand' (Isa. liii. 10)."

But can such be the real meaning of the prophecy? Messiah is, indeed, the representative of his people, and what is said in praise of the righteous in general may in most cases be affirmed of the Righteous One. But the question is, has the pyramid which springs from earth no top that reaches towards heaven? Does the prophecy not point distinctly to one who in his own individual person should realise in the fullest sense the idea of "the servant of Jahveh"?

In the great section of Isaiah's book which precedes the description of the great sufferer, the Servant of Jahveh is said to be made use of by Jahveh as a threshing instrument, sharp, with teeth (chap. xli. 15). One task intrusted to him is to raise up the tribes of Israel, and to restore them to their forfeited inheritance. But that task is mentioned as too light and easy a work for him. The servant is to do something grander, to become salvation unto the ends of the earth (chap. xlix. 6). Great however as this work is, the servant of Jahveh is "despised," like many of the prophets before him. "Abhorred by a nation,"¹ he becomes even "a servant of despots"² (chap. xlix. 7). His labour is for a

¹ The Heb. נָא is without the article. Yet it is not so indefinite in meaning as "a nation" would imply. It is probably without the article to indicate almost the same as *mankind*, i.e. neither Jews nor Gentiles considered specifically as such. See the notes of Delitzsch and Cheyne.

² This is the sense of מְלֹתִים, heathen tyrants being probably signified.

time in vain, his strength is spent for nought and vanity (chap. xl ix. 4). He has his moments of discouragement. But his mouth is like a sharp sword, and he like an arrow hidden in Jahveh's quiver (chap. xl ix. 2). In due season that "polished arrow" shall be shot forth as "the arrow of Jahveh's deliverance" (2 Kings xiii. 17). For, filled with the spirit of Jahveh, the Servant is to persevere until his work is accomplished. It is said of Jahveh that "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead them that give suck" (chap. xl. 11); and it is also recorded of the Servant that he will similarly seek for those that are gone astray. "A crushed reed shall he not break, and the dim-burning wick shall he not quench" (chap. xl ii. 3). Though discouraged, "he shall not burn dimly, neither shall he be utterly crushed, till he have set judgment in the earth, for the isles are waiting for his law" (chap. xl ii. 4).¹ In vain the enemies pursue His people, exclaiming in their pride: "I will pursue, overtake, destroy" (Exod. xv. 9). Their "chariots and horse, army and hero" (Isa. xl iii. 17), are brought forth, though they know it not (Ezek. xxxviii. 4), by Jahveh that He may get Him honour over their might and their pride. "They lie down together," overwhelmed by "the mighty waters," "they cannot rise, they are quenched like a wick" (Isa. xl iii. 17).²

But through those same "mighty waters," Israel is led safely, though they be "a sea of trouble" (Zech. x. 11). A path is prepared for them in the sea. When they pass through the waters, Jahveh is with them; when they walk

¹ It is important for the purpose of comparison with the verse following, and of noticing the contrast set forth in chap. xl iii. 17, to carefully observe here the expressions מִצְרָיִם and קַהֲלָה לֹא יִכְבְּנָה כְּתָף. Hence our attempt to preserve the uniformity of expression in English.

² The reference to the overthrow of the Egyptians at the Red Sea is unmistakable. A strong argument in favour of the high antiquity of the Pentateuch could be constructed from a careful induction of all such incidental references to its history in the Prophets of Israel,

through the fire, the flame does not kindle upon them (Isa. xlivi. 2). The wilderness is transformed before them, rivers appear suddenly in the desert, shady trees spring up in all directions (chap. xli. 17-20); and Jahveh answers the prayer of His Servant, who has "to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel." "Kings see and arise; princes, and they worship, because of Jahveh, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel who had chosen Him" (chap. xlix. 6-8).

Such is a rapid glance at what may be seen represented in the outer courts of this wondrous temple of prophecy. The representation given of "the Servant" is evidently of One higher and holier than the "Israel according to the spirit." "The Servant" is in Israel, of Israel, and yet separated from Israel. He is sometimes hidden among his people, and his personality is concealed, but his own individual importance and his special work, ever and anon, start forth again prominently into view.

But we have to enter the innermost shrine of the prophecy, the holiest of all where the work of reconciliation is pourtrayed. On the very threshold we hear the outburst of praise and thanksgiving (Isa. lli. 7-12). There is a cry of joy on the mountains around Jerusalem announcing peace and redemption. The kingdom has come, Jahveh has returned to His people—Jahveh is king! His holy arm is bared—"all the ends of the earth," and not merely Israel, have seen the salvation of God. The shout of salvation is followed by a cry of warning to the unholy—"Depart ye, depart"—the priests must become clean, the peoples must be sanctified. Jahveh Himself proceeds in front, before His people. They that follow after must ride "upon white horses, clothed in fine linen pure and white" (Rev. xix. 14). Jahveh goes also behind His people, to protect them on every side, for He is their rear-guard.

The prophetic declaration, written over the portal of the

innermost shrine, is to the effect that the Servant "deals wisely;¹ he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high" (chap. lii. 13). But the sight that meets the view on entering is of a very different character. The image of the Servant is all disfigurement. "Marred more than any man" is too great a softening down of the picture presented in the original. The appearance of the Servant of Jahveh is so fearfully disfigured, that it is no longer that of a man. His form does not appear like the sons of men.² Many shrink back appalled from the sight. He is despised, and forsaken by men—a man of sorrows (full of pain), well-acquainted with sickness! At his appearance his fellows cover their faces with disgust. They regard him as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Leprous in appearance, he is shunned; like a leper he is avoided. The reference to that awful plague is unmistakeable, and when the question is asked in the Talmud of Babylon, "what is the name of Messiah?" the reply directly given is "The Leprous One," although "those of the house of Rabbi" [Judah the Holy] preferred to give a less terrible answer,

¹ This translation is affirmed to be "a mistake" by Dr. S. M. Schiller-Szinessy in his "*Exposition of Isaiah lii. 13, 14, 15, and liii. delivered before the Council of the Senate in the Law School on Friday, April 28th, 1882*," Cambridge, 1882. The learned Rabbi asserts p. 9 that "נִשְׁבַּח" occurs in three places in the Bible besides here, and in none of those places does it mean: he shall, or he will, or he does, deal prudently. It means: to be successful, to prosper, and so also the Targum renders it "נִצְלָה."

But such criticism is quite misleading. It is true that the 3rd per. sing. impf. of this conj. of the verb only occurs in four passages, inclusive of Isaiah lii. 13. But surely that fact is of no importance, seeing that other persons of the impf. and of the perfect occur frequently, and are used in the sense assigned to the verb in the Auth. Vers. One can scarcely imagine how such a criticism can be meant seriously. The Messianic reference, however, does not depend upon the rendering one way or other.

² The original indicates here very plainly that his countenance was disfigured to such a degree as to be no longer like that of a man. The form נִשְׁבַּח may no doubt, regarded from a grammatical standpoint, be variously explained. But it is certain that the explanation of Dr. Schiller-Szinessy, who regards it as standing "simply for נִשְׁבַּח, deteriorated, corrupted, destroyed, the past of the Niph'al being used participially here," will not be accepted by any scientific grammarians.

and simply quoted the text: "As it is said 'Surely he hath borne our sicknesses.' " (*Sanhedrin*, 98 b).¹

Repentant Israel in the days in which, as described by another prophet, they shall mourn for "the Pierced" One "as one mourneth for his only son" (Zech. xii. 10), are represented as bitterly sorrowing over past ignorance and blindness in the following terms: "Who believed that which we heard? and the arm of Jahveh unto whom was it revealed?" That which we saw was a "mystery" too deep for us to comprehend. Jahveh's holy arm had to be made bare, ere we could understand Jahveh's "secret."² For the Servant grew up before Him, under His protection, "as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground; he had no (personal) beauty or (royal) majesty, and if we looked on him, there was no appearance that we should desire him" (chap. liii. 1-3).

Those who thus speak are not the Gentiles—the nations of the earth. The Gentiles and their kings are "startled"³

¹ See the text of this passage and the notes thereon in the valuable work, *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah according to the Jewish Interpreters*. 2 vols. I. Texts edited from Printed Books and MSS. by Ad. Neubauer. II. Translations by S. R. Driver and Ad. Neubauer, with Introd. by Rev. E. B. Pusey. Oxford and London, 1877.

² Note the connexion between Isaiah lii. 10 and Isaiah liii. 1, and both in relation to the doctrine of Psalm xxv. 14.

³ We must again set aside Dr. Schiller-Szinessy's unique rendering of Isaiah lii. 15 "so shall he attract great nations." Even if the rendering be retained "so shall he sprinkle many nations," it would be absurd to refer it to baptism. But that is not the usual "Christian" interpretation, as Dr. Schiller-Szinessy seems to suppose. It is more usual to explain the passage by reference to the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, or of the water of purification on the leper. There is much in favour of the latter view, as it would coincide with the reference to the stricken leper in ch. liii. 4 (יְלִמּוּ) and in ch. liii. 8 (יְלִמּוּ). The verb is often used in that sense. But the difficulty is, the verb is never connected, as in this passage, with a simple accus. of the person sprinkled. If we could, as Cheyne observes, after "sprinkle" insert the words "his blood upon" before "many nations," the passage would refer to the sacerdotal office of "the Servant." But as the text stands, we must, however, with the majority of critics, render the word as in the margin of the Revised Version, by "startle," i.e. make to leap with astonishment. See Delitzsch on the passage.

and confounded when the Servant takes to himself the kingdom and assumes the position which is rightly his. They shut their mouths in awe at his superior dignity, "For that which had not been told them they shall see ; and that which they had not heard shall they understand" (lii. 15). For the Hebrew prophets were not sent to the Gentiles. It was for Israel's enlightenment that those teachers were raised up and commissioned from on high. But they to whom the message of salvation was sent accepted not the message. The ears of Israel were heavy, and they understood not the preaching ; their eyes were closed, so that they saw not the visions sent to their prophets from the Most High.

Late in time the arm of Jahveh is manifested. The "mystery" is unfolded to Israel, the "secret" is revealed. "The seed of Jacob" are overwhelmed with sorrow. They acknowledge their sin and short-sightedness, and, as they recall the sight once beheld by them,—the sight of "the Leprous One,"—they exclaim :

"Surely it was our sicknesses he took up, and our pains, he bore them ; and we regarded him one stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted! And HE, wounded on account of our transgressions! crushed¹ on account of our iniquities ! the punishment of our peace (*i.e.* punishment tending to our peace) was upon him ! and through his stripes we have been healed !! All we like a flock did go astray, we turned each to his own way ; and Jahveh made to light down upon him the iniquity of us all !" (chap. liii. 4-6).

Such is the penitential wailing—not now that of the "daughters of Jerusalem" only, but of the whole house of Israel. "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will Jahveh lead them" (Jer. xxxi. 9) to acknowledge their guilt and shame.

But the sound of wailing ceases, and the Prophet narrates himself the sufferings of the great Servant—

¹ נִפְלַע Comp. v. 10, and also by way of contrast the use of the word in Jer. xliv. 10.

"He is oppressed (as by slave-drivers),¹ and he let himself be humbled,² and opens not his mouth; as the sheep led to the slaughter; and as a ewe before her shearers dumb, and opens not his mouth. Through oppression and through a judgment (a judicial sentence) he was taken away—and as for his generation (*i.e.* those who lived in his day), who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of My people a stroke was upon him!³ And one assigned his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man⁴ in his martyr-deaths,⁵ although he had done no violence neither was any deceit in his mouth" (liii. 7-9).

Lastly, the Prophet, having thus sketched vividly the sinless conduct and the cruel sufferings of the Servant of Jahveh, distinctly unfolds the Divine purpose in permitting those sufferings; and then finally declares, like the Psalmist of old, the Divine decree touching the ultimate exaltation of the Sufferer.

¹ נִגְשֵׁת Compare the use of this verb in reference to taskmasters and slave-drivers, Exod. iii. 7; Job iii. 18.

² See Delitzsch's note on the syntax in the 3rd edit. of his commentary.

³ There has been much discussion on the question whether לָמוּן can be regarded as singular. Cheyne and Delitzsch decide in the affirmative (see the critical note of the former). They are led to this decision chiefly by the context. If the passage were only regarded from a grammatical point of view, it would be easier to regard the suffix as plural: "for the transgression of My people they were stricken." But the general Messianic interpretation would be in nowise imperilled by the acceptance even of this alternative rendering.

⁴ Many critics regard the expression וְאַחֲרֵי־שִׁיר as a collective corresponding to the אֶת־חֶרְמָשִׁים of the previous sentence. But there is a decided difficulty in this view. If the two words were intended to have been exactly parallel the plural might have been easily employed. The expression "the poor" is unquestionably often used in the Psalms as synonymous with "the righteous," but there is no clear case on the other side, that is, of "the rich" being used distinctly for "the wicked." On the other hand, the difficulty of regarding the second clause, to be contrasted with the former lies in the facts, (1) that in such a case we should have expected נִגְחָוּן, and (2) that it is most natural to regard the second clause as closely connected with the former, thus: "and one assigned his grave with the rich in his death." Some critics with Ewald would, therefore, correct the text. The text as it stands agrees strikingly with the facts recorded in the Gospels, although there is not a word there said "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." See our remarks on the passage on p. 418.

⁵ בְּמִתְּהֵן. The plural is perhaps best regarded with Briggs (*Messianic Prophecy*, p. 353) as emphatic, denoting violent death, or martyr-death. Cheyne would prefer simply to read בְּמִתְּהֵן, *in his death* (sing.). I agree with Cheyne that the reading בְּמִתְּהֵן "in his tomb" is very doubtful, for it is very questionable whether בָּמָה can mean a *tomb*. And the difficulty of the plural still remains.

"And Jahveh was pleased to crush him! He afflicted him with sickness!¹ If a guilt-offering his soul should make,² he would see a seed,³ he would prolong days, and the pleasure of Jahveh would prosper in his hand. After the travail of his soul⁴ he would see, be satisfied.

"By his knowledge shall My Righteous Servant make the many righteous, and their iniquities shall HE bear. Therefore I assign him a portion among the many,⁵ and with the strong shall he assign the

¹ The form of the verb is somewhat irregular, but it has been satisfactorily explained in Kautzsch's Gesenius Gr., § 75, rem. 17. It is unnecessary to change the pointing, as recommended by several critics. The expression, of course, must be understood figuratively, whether the prophecy be explained of Israel, the prophets, or the Messiah. The superficial objection of the Jews that such statements cannot refer to Christ, because it is nowhere said in the Gospels that He endured sickness, is undeserving of serious reply. Note, however, our remarks on p. 416.

² Compare, with Cheyne, *τιθέναι τὴν ψυχήν*, John x. 11. The difference between the "sin-offering" (ΠΝΩΦΗ) and the "trespass-offering" or "guilt-offering" (ΜΠΛΗ) must be duly noted. As Delitzsch observes, the idea at the root of the ΠΝΩΦΗ, or the whole burnt offering, is (*oblatio*) the presentation of adoration; of the ΜΠΛΗ, that of (*conciliatio*) peace or friendship; of the ΗΝΩΦΗ, that of a *gift* presented to God (*donatio*); of the ΗΝΑΦΗ, sin-offering, expiation (*expiatio*), such as it is for instance presented in v. 5; and of the ΜΠΛΗ, *satisfaction*, restitution (*mulleta, satisfactio*). The work of the Servant of Jahveh comprehends all these several ideas. See Delitzsch's note. It is unwise to import into the discussion of the prophecy any considerations drawn from theories adopted concerning the age of the Pentateuch, such as that "the distinction between a sin-offering and guilt-offering was not very clearly drawn when the prophet wrote."

³ It is important to observe that the original is not "his seed." The common objection of the Jewish controversialists to the application to Christ is thus most easily met. See the *Chizzuk Emunah* of R. Yizchak, edited by Rabbi D. Deutsch (Sohrau i O.-Schl. 1865), in which it is contended against Dr. A. McCaul that disciples might be styled sons (בָּנִים), but never (בָּנָה) a seed. But Cheyne's reference to Psalm xxii. 30—"a seed shall serve him"—is conclusive. Dr. Pusey refers, in proof of the figurative use of "seed," to Isaiah i. 4; lvii. 4. But this can be retorted, see Deutsch, p. 380. Mal. ii. 15 is almost a better reference. Dr. Schiller-Szinessy (p. 25), while maintaining that "seed can only mean actual and material progeny," considers the absence of the personal suffix fatal to the Jewish objection. We cannot coincide, however, with the latter scholar in introducing an understood relative into the next clause, making it mean "a generation 'which shall prolong days.'" The introduction of the relative is quite out of place, although countenanced by the transl. of the LXX., Vulg., and Targ.

⁴ Briggs (*Messianic Prophecy*, p. 359) regards the נִשְׁתַּחֲוֵל, here and in the preceding verse as reflexive, "himself." But the rendering is very doubtful. We see a deeper significance in the expression.

⁵ We must insist on the uniform translation of בָּנִים throughout the prophecy. It is used without the article in chap. lii. 14, chap. liii. 12, at end;

portion of the spoil, because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and he took up the sin of many, and for the transgressors makes intercession”¹ (chap. liii. 10–12).

Such a prophecy, regarded as a whole, whatever may be affirmed of a few of its clauses, cannot be interpreted of Israel—whether the Israel after the flesh, or the Israel after the spirit. Few interpreters are now hardy enough to maintain the former exposition. Many have essayed to uphold the latter. But in order to give a show of plausibility to such an exposition, the most important statements must be glossed over. The doctrine of vicarious suffering is too strongly imprinted on the passage to permit of its being eradicated without an utter destruction of the prophecy itself. The sufferings of the Jewish race were not vicarious, though “the fall of the Jew has been the riches of the world and their loss the richness of the Gentiles” (Rom. xi. 12). The voice of the Hebrew lawgiver, the voices of the Hebrew prophets, all with one accord proclaim the solemn fact that the sufferings endured by that unhappy nation have been the consequence of their sins. We rejoice not in those sufferings. Nay we look forward with longing to the day when the reception back of the Jewish or Israelitish race into Divine favour shall be “life from the dead” to the world at large (Rom. xii. 15).

But the bold assertion that the great prophecy, of which

with the article in chap. liii. 11, and in the early portion of v. 12. Also as qualifying “nations” in chap. lii. 14. St. Paul’s use of *οἱ πολλοὶ, the many*, in Rom. vi. 15–19, gives the true key to the meaning of the prophecy.

¹ Briggs renders “and for transgressors interposes,” which he explains by “acts as substitute.” He does not approve of the idea that the passage speaks of the “priestly intercession of Christ, which is contrary to the theme of the entire piece, which sets forth the victim and not the priest.” We cannot coincide with this view. לִנְדָן cannot be used here in the same sense as in verse 6. It has the sense of “interceding” in Jeremiah xv. 11. We have not to make the statements of the prophecy, but simply to interpret them. It appears to us most suitable and most beautiful that the last mention made of the Sufferer in the passage should be that he intercedes for the transgressors. We decline even to change the tense as is done in the Revised Version.

we have given a sketch, "may be consistently applied to Israel as represented by the pious in his midst, culminating in the Messiah"¹ depends entirely upon the assumption that the five opening verses of chap. liii. describe "the speech of the nations and kings of heathendom." That interpretation is, however, almost impossible. The Jewish race can in no proper sense be regarded as the most despicable and oppressed of all nations. Nor could an inspired writer in the days of our prophet (whether the author was Isaiah of Jerusalem who lived prior to the exile, or some "Great Unknown" who lived posterior to that era) have thus painted his nation. It is incorrect to assert that "it is the righteous Israelite only, culminating in the Messiah, that has suffered both outwardly and inwardly: outwardly because he conformed not to the heathen majority, and inwardly because he, the firstborn of God, the ever and deeply feeling heart of the human race, deplored the erring of the world which went after idols various."² The Jewish people have, indeed, endured fearful and unjust oppression. That oppression has, however, not been occasioned in general by any bold protest made by Jews against idolatry. The Jews scattered among the nations have not sought to turn the nations from idolatry. Too often the real explanation of the cruel wrongs of the Jew has been the greed for gold on the part of their Gentile oppressors. Oppressed by the Gentiles, the Jews have too often learned to oppress the Gentiles in turn. The wish to be free from the payment of extravagant usury, the desire to wipe off at the expense of a traditional foe debts recklessly incurred, as well as "the love of money" which "is a root of all kinds of evils" (1 Tim. vi. 10), have been the real motives which have prompted designing men to excite Christian fanaticism against the Jewish people.

¹ Dr. Schiller-Szinessy, *Exposition*, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Religion has been but the stalking horse on which covetousness has ridden forth to massacre.

In no case, however, could the nations be represented as affirming even of the pious in Israel under such sorrows (often inflicted upon the innocent and noble) : "the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his being wounded healing was given to us." The cruel Gentiles have had themselves to suffer for the injuries inflicted on the Jew. No wholesale injustice (so often perpetrated in such persecutions) has been permitted to pass unavenged by the God who rules over human history. There is a day of judgment coming for the wrongs committed by individual transgressors ; but peoples suffer for their crimes in this world. "There is no day of judgment for nations."

The picture presented in the holy of holies of this prophecy is, however, a sadder one than even that of the sufferings of the Jew. The picture is symbolical, but oh ! how real. It is easy to trace there the lineaments of Jesus of Nazareth. His humble origin from a fallen house, from a lowly family. From the old felled tree of Jesse, "the shoot" springs up out of the long-neglected stump. He deals wisely. What wisdom the very concealment of His Divinity from the eyes of the sons of men ? He was not the God merely "veiled in flesh." The incarnation was real, not merely external. The Divinity communicated itself to the humanity, as the latter was able to bear it. There was a veritable emptying of Himself (Phil. ii. 7), a true "exinanition," as theologians have termed it. The equality with the Divine was not "a thing to be grasped at" (Phil. ii. 6). "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke ii. 52). He was little, and he grew in size—He was ignorant, and He advanced in knowledge. He grew in favour with God ; for every step was sinless and perfect,—the shoot, the bud, the flower. "Perfect man," He "learned obedience by the things

which He suffered" (Heb. v. 8). Made capable of intellectual and spiritual, as well as of bodily growth, He was at last "made perfect," and became unto all them that obey Him the author of everlasting salvation" (Heb. v. 9).

But though He grew in favour in some respects with man, how was He the Sinless One treated? The existence of a Sinless One excited hatred and not love in the breasts of those to whom His very existence was a standing reproof. His best security lay in retirement. So unknown, save to a small circle, some of whom loved Him, most of whom disliked Him, none of whom understood Him, "the Chosen One" of Jahveh passed the mysterious time of infancy, childhood, boyhood, and early manhood. He came forth from His obscurity to walk up and down in the land that was His own (John i. 11)—belonging to Him by a more solemn covenant than ever made with Abraham. "His own people received Him not" (John i. 11). He taught them, and He healed their sick; not, too, without suffering, if we can venture to touch on so solemn a theme. "Virtue went out of Him" (Luke viii. 46). Was He none the weaker? Did Jehovah not literally make Him sick? Note the wondrous reference in the Gospel of St. Matthew (the passage is not quoted from the LXX.), where, after recording Christ's healing influence, it is said, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, 'Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases'" (Matt. viii. 17). He was at least once defiled with ceremonial impurity when He put forth His hand and touched the unclean leper.

But pass over such scenes as these, and fix your attention on the close. There He stands! *Ecce homo!* Condemned by the highest ecclesiastical council, at an extraordinary midnight session, and—of the crime of blasphemy. The Holy One is accused and sentenced for impiety. He who claimed to be the Son of God was condemned by those who were the Divine representatives on earth, as guilty of the

most terrible sin. "He was made sin for us" (2 Cor. v. 21). Beaten, buffeted, reviled, and spat upon. Dragged before the civil tribunal He was there acknowledged innocent, but not set free. Placed at the bar of a second judge, a king, He was, on account of His silence, "led as a lamb to the slaughter, like a ewe dumb before her shearers." He was mocked, set at nought. Placed once more at the tribunal of His former judge, He was scourged (no doubt in the hope of exciting the sympathy of the mob), dressed in mockery in a cast-off soldier's garment, crowned with thorns. The cries of the multitude demand His execution; and the unjust judge, after vainly trying to divest himself of the responsibility of the crime, gave sentence against Him on the charge of rebellion and of usurpation of the rights and title which belonged to Cæsar.

From the standpoint of the Biblical student, we cannot affect admiration for any one of the many pictures of the Christ on His way to the cross. Art has felt herself compelled to throw a veil over the grosser indignities of the scene. The Redeemer's face itself must have been sadly disfigured. The strokes which had fallen on the Sacred Head caused it to present externally rather the appearance of the stricken Leper of Isaiah, than the majestic countenance art delights to paint. If the awful reality could be delineated on canvas, men would even now turn their faces away, appalled at such a sight. The picture is too revolting to be set forth in its dread reality. But in softening down the horrors of the scene, art has unwittingly done much to keep alive the Apollinarian heresy, which—though nominally relegated to the lumber-room of forgotten heresies—is in reality one of the most widely-spread delusions of modern times. The true doctrine of the incarnation, set forth in the much-abused "Athanasian creed," is too little comprehended by Christians in general. But if formulated bravely and boldly, and "in language understood of the

people," it would do much to lessen some of the difficulties of modern belief, and to roll away stones of stumbling from the feet of the Jewish people.

We pass over in silence the deep sorrows of Gethsemane, and do not venture to watch that awful hour with the Redeemer. How "crushed" He was in that sad vigil no mortal can conceive. The solemn words of the prophet: "It pleased Jahveh to crush him," may be regarded almost as an answer to the "strong crying and tears," which found utterance in the prayer: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

The scene on Golgotha, too, we do not venture to depict, or to point out how it coincides with the prophecy. The prophetic cry of "the Elijah that was to come," long ago expounded all in one verse: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (John i. 29.)

Lightly the Roman judge assigned Him in his original decree, "a grave with the wicked," for, condemned as a malefactor, His body would naturally have been cast into the grave with the malefactors who were crucified with him. The parallelism of the Hebrew verse would lead easily to the conclusion, that "the rich man" in the following sentence ought to be explained as corresponding to "the wicked men" of the first member of the verse. But no satisfactory proofs have been assigned to show that the expression "the rich" is really synonymous with "the wicked."¹ The verse is unique. We do not venture to condemn those critics who take the view alluded to as unorthodox, and we distinctly maintain that the prophecy would have been sufficiently fulfilled, if not one word had been said about Christ's burial in the Gospels. But with

¹ See note 4, p. 411. We would, however, direct attention to a remarkable article taking this view in Luthardt's *Zeitschrift* for 1887, written by an orthodox scholar, Pastor J. H. Findeisen.

the incidents which accompanied our Lord's burial full in view, and the significant fact of the consignment of the Redeemer's body to the rich man's grave, we see distinct indications of Providence, which, although not recorded as fulfilments of prophecy, seem to us to point back to "the glorious passional" of Isaiah liii. For it ought not to be forgotten that our Lord was committed to the grave of Joseph by Pilate's special permission and decree. Without such a decree the bodies even of the malefactors could not have been removed from the cross on which they hung. Although, therefore, prior to the fulfilment of the prophecy it would have been better to have regarded the "rich" as a synonym for the "wicked," with "the light of the cross" shed back upon the prophecy, it is more natural to explain it as we have done.

But "it is finished." The cross has been endured. The reward has been gained. The Redeemer, who before Gethsemane pleaded for His people, who on the cross prayed for His murderers, when raised from the dead sent back a message of salvation. The Prophet has gone up on high. The atonement has been made. The blood has been sprinkled on the mercy-seat. The Priest is now on His throne. He to whom "all power is given in heaven and earth," who has all "knowledge," and can "justify" those that believe in Him, still carries on His work as "the Priest behind the veil." "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). But the golden bells are ringing, fastened to His High-priestly robe (Exod. xxxix. 25, 26), and soon the once Suffering Servant, the now exalted King, will draw aside the curtain, and, victorious Himself, will summon His people, made victorious by His grace, to receive the High-priestly blessing:—

"Jahveh bless thee, and keep thee: Jahveh make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: Jahveh

lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."—*Num.* vi. 24–26.

"Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."—*Matt.* xxv. 34.

CHARLES H. H. WRIGHT.

THE LANGUAGE USED BY THE APOSTLES.

DR. ALEXANDER ROBERTS's recent volume, *Greek the Language of Christ and His Apostles*, is an excellent example of the service that may be done to New Testament criticism by continuous, we may almost say, life-long devotion to a single problem. He has collected with remarkable diligence every scrap of evidence bearing on the question. He has put forward his arguments with great candour and fairness ; and maintains a tone of unvarying courtesy towards opponents, even where he is compelled to regard their views as inconsistent or extravagant. But it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he has at times encumbered his main contention by elaborate demonstrations of facts, which few would be found to dispute ; and that, on the other hand, he has strained the faith of his readers by pushing inferences beyond the warrant of facts in the interests of the extreme form of his theory. It is manifestly unfair to pick holes here and there in a series of arguments which derive much of their force from their cumulative character. But at the same time it is impossible to deal adequately within narrow limits with those parts of his work which derive such cogency as they may possess from theories still strongly contested. For this reason a general estimate of his volume may be left for other critics or for some other occasion. The purpose