

ISAIAH'S ANTICIPATIONS OF THE FUTURE.

SOME RECENT THEORIES.

FEW Old Testament writings owe more to the combined results of criticism and archæology than the book of Isaiah. The task of distinguishing in this very composite whole the real work of Isaiah ben Amoz has now been approximately accomplished; and it is fast becoming generally admitted that the writings of the great prophet of the eighth century do not extend beyond the following chapters: i.-xi., xiv. 24-xx., xxi. 11-xxiii., xxviii.-xxxii.<sup>1</sup> More recent investigators have therefore been the freer to pay attention to the discovery of glosses or interpolations within this Isaianic kernel; several apparent instances are discussed in Duhm's commentary, published two years since, and in the dissertations, to be discussed below, of Giesebrecht and Hackmann. The presence, to some extent, of such intrusive matter in the prophetic writings is proved beyond doubt by the evidence of the LXX., and by the Aramaic verse at Jeremiah x. 11; the exegete therefore should give due weight to the possibility of the confusion and inconsequence of thought which at present prevails in many prophetic passages being due to textual expansion, just as the grammarian is bound to consider the possibility of an anomalous form or construction being due to textual corruption.

But if criticism, by separating alien passages from the writings of Isaiah with which they had become interwoven, has contributed much and promises to contribute more to a correct knowledge of Isaiah's own ideas, archæology has, by determining the chronology of the prophecies, done

<sup>1</sup> The most important section, besides those mentioned above, still claimed by many as Isaianic is chap. xxxiii.; indeed the weight of English criticism would still seem to regard this chapter as Isaiah's; cf. Driver, *Introduction*, p. 213; G. A. Smith, *The Book of Isaiah*, pp. 331 ff.; Kirkpatrick, *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 199, 200; Robertson Smith, *Prophecy* (1882), p. 421. Otherwise Cheyne, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, iv. 569.

much to make it possible to trace the development of these ideas. Here again a welcome addition of knowledge might result from further discoveries; meantime criticism does well to make the most of what fixed points we have. Chief among these, for our present purpose, is the determination of the "death year of King Uzziah." This we now know from the Assyrian inscriptions did not fall earlier than 740; nor can it have been much later. From this it follows that the Syro-Ephraimitish war broke out somewhat less than five years, instead of, as was formally supposed, somewhat more than twenty years after the prophet's call. Hence from Isaiah viii. 3<sup>1</sup> we deduce that Isaiah's eldest son, Shear-Jashub, must have been born at the time of, or very shortly after, the call. But this son was one of the children given Isaiah "for signs and wonders in Israel" (viii. 18); and an examination of the name shows that it expresses one of Isaiah's characteristic doctrines—a remnant shall return. The date of the child's birth, moreover, proves that this doctrine was not one at which the prophet slowly arrived—deriving it, like Hosea, as an emotional corollary from a belief in Jehovah's love of Israel—but one from which the prophet started. On this point, then, that Isaiah from the first had a doctrine of the Remnant and that in one way or other this doctrine was normative with him, there is agreement. It is when we come to ask what was the nature of the remnant he believed in, how his earlier conceptions stood related to his later, and in what way any change which took place was due to the political developments of the time, that we find disagreement among recent writers on the subject.

The latest and fullest treatment comes from Dr. Hackmann, *Privatdocent* at Göttingen, and is contained in his book published last year entitled, *Die Zukunftserwartung des Jesaia*. Although to many some of his arguments

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Driver, *Isaiah*, p. 1.

might appear too *à priori*, his discussion is so careful and suggestive that some exposition of it, especially in its bearing on certain exegetical problems, may be of interest to students of Biblical Theology and Exegesis.

But his book, standing, as it does, at the end of a series of discussions on the same subject, can only be estimated aright in the light of these. A brief *résumé* of the more important of such earlier discussions may make this clear.

It is now all but twenty years since Duhm published his important work on the Theology of the Prophets; in it he devoted a special section (pp. 158-168) to the discussion of Isaiah's prophecies of the Future. His conclusions were as follows: From the beginning Isaiah looked forward to a definite catastrophe which at first he conceived as affecting only Israel and Judah. Afterwards he extends this area of judgment and gradually includes the surrounding nations, together with Egypt, ultimately also Assyria. This judgment is to be complete that it may replace the present corrupt by a completely new epoch. This gradually increasing conception of Judgment is accompanied by gradually enlarging Hopes. The severer the Judgment, the more glorious the Future that lies beyond it. Duhm finds Isaiah's originality to consist in the idea that the promised Future will be essentially characterised not by a mere fortunate turn in circumstances but by a complete change in all the relations of life.

According to Guthe,<sup>1</sup> Isaiah had two distinct views of the Future; the one characterises the earlier, the other the later prophecies. In common with his predecessors, Amos and Hosea, Isaiah saw that Assyria must sooner or later bear down on his own and the surrounding countries, and that it would then prove too strong for them. At the same time, being possessed of a deeper view of Jehovah's character than then prevailed, he saw in the present state

<sup>1</sup> In his inaugural lecture, *Das Zukunftsbild des Jesaja* (Leipzig, 1885).

of Judah a neglect of Jehovah's holiest requirements, which could only be sufficiently punished by direst national calamities. In Isaiah's earliest prophecies we therefore find a dark view of the Future: Judah and Israel, save for a small remnant, are utterly to perish; Ahaz, the present worthless representative of David, is to be replaced, after a somewhat lengthened period of severe distress, by another descendant of David of ideal character.

But events proved less disastrous than Isaiah had anticipated; and although this could not change his fundamental conviction of the need for a purifying judgment, it did effect a change in his conception of the Future. The later prophecies are therefore characterized by the belief in the Invincibility of Zion, and the absence of the conception of the Messianic King. Distress is still anticipated, but its duration is to be brief (x. 25; xxix. 17).

The abandonment of the earlier conception, which took place between 724 and 701, is justified by the prophet in the parable of the husbandman's different modes of cultivation (xxviii. 23-29). From the retention of the passages respecting the future ideal Davidic ruler in Isaiah's collected prophecies, Guthe argues that subsequently to 701, finding that the great deliverance of that year did not produce the age of moral regeneration, the prophet so far returned to his earlier conception as to see again that the actual reigning king would be unworthy of the expected Future. In a sense, therefore, Guthe may be said to attribute *three* different views to Isaiah.

This Giesebrecht<sup>1</sup> certainly does, and finds all three in the extant prophecies; he refers them severally to the three great political crises of Isaiah's lifetime. During the Syro-Ephraimitish war the prophet expected the complete destruction of Judah, in the last days of Samaria the preservation of Judah, at the time of Sennacherib's campaign

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Beiträge zur Jesaiakritik* (Göttingen, 1890); see esp. pp. 76-84.

(701) the preservation of a remnant, but the destruction of the main part of Judah. These changes moreover, according to Giesebrecht, were sudden, and so corresponded to the "choleric nature of the prophet."

Duhm, then, so interprets the prophecies as to attribute to Isaiah a gradual development in his doctrine of the Future: at the last, as at the first, it remains essentially the same, only it grows in course of time more far-reaching both as regards judgment and the subsequent glory. Guthe and Giesebrecht, on the other hand, agree in postulating for Isaiah a complete change of doctrine: they also agree in supposing that neither his earliest nor his latest anticipations were the most hopeful. Hackmann, like Duhm, finds a gradual development of doctrine; but, unlike Duhm, and by no means in full agreement with either Guthe or Giesebrecht, he finds this development characterized by increasing anticipations of disaster and diminishing hopes of deliverance. The prophet's hopes are at a maximum in his earliest, at a minimum in his latest writings. More in detail the history of Isaiah's Doctrine of the Future is, according to Hackmann, as follows.

It was, in the first instance, against Ephraim that Isaiah felt himself called to prophesy. Ephraim was irremediably corrupt and ripe for judgment; Judah might still be saved by learning from Ephraim's doom and returning to God. The first of these two thoughts dominates the narrative of the vision (chap. vi.); the second finds expression in the name—Shear-Jashub—given at about the same time to Isaiah's son. Tacitly, indeed, this name implies the first thought also; for a remnant implies a whole, and a remnant that returns a greater part that does not return. The whole is Ephraim and Judah (for the idea of national unity survived the disruption of the monarchy) and the part that does not return<sup>1</sup> is Ephraim.

<sup>1</sup> The contrast to the name שְׁאֵר יָשׁוּב—a remnant (*i.e.* Judah) shall return—

Such was Isaiah's doctrine before the Syro-Ephraimitish war; and the first change it underwent was only due to the attitude of Judah during this war. The people failed to catch the inspiration of Isaiah's own faith in Jehovah. On the other hand, overtures were made to Assyria, and Judah thus came to share Ephraim's disloyalty to Jehovah. Perceiving this, Isaiah recognised that Judah would not "return," and that it too must suffer punishment. It is true, he did not in consequence wholly abandon his doctrine of the remnant; but the remnant is now no longer all Judah, but only the prophet's immediate followers (cf. viii. 5-8, 11-15).

Between the conclusion of the war and the invasion of Sennacherib few prophecies now extant were delivered. The brief utterance in xxviii. 1-4 shows that the continued existence of Samaria after 732 did not diminish the prophet's conviction of its doom;<sup>1</sup> and chap. xx., dating from 711, that then also Isaiah anticipated only disaster from reliance on Egypt. In this interval, however, the fall of Samaria justified his judgment that Ephraim was irrevocably doomed. The question now arose afresh—What was to be the future of Judah? As early as 733 Isaiah had, as has been stated, abandoned the hope that all Judah would "return"; and, although, during the early part of Hezekiah's reign, the prophet may have given less frequent utterance to his conviction of coming judgment, yet he never wavered in it, and the subsequent attitude of Hezekiah and his princes only served to deepen it.

Even the great deliverance of 701, unexpected alike by Isaiah and the people, did not lead the latter to stay them-

comes out forcibly on the above theory in vi. 10: The people are to be hardened "lest they see with their eyes . . . and return" (וְשׁוּב), *i.e.* Ephraim shall *not* return.

<sup>1</sup> A fact that does not favour Guthe's theory that it was the continued existence of Jerusalem after Isaiah had anticipated its fall that gave rise to his belief in the invincibility of Zion.

selves on Jehovah; on the contrary, they gave themselves up to wanton merriment (xxii. 2 ff.). The state of Judah was thus finally and conclusively shown to be what that of Ephraim had been thirty years before, and the prophet's last forecast for Judah thus becomes: "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die" (xxii. 14).

In brief, Isaiah, according to Hackmann, started with a view of the Future which involved the destruction of Ephraim, but the possible preservation of Judah, and finally came to a view which involved the certain destruction of Judah also.

The theory in its entirety rests on two main positions: (1) That before and during the earlier part of the Syro-Ephraimitish war Isaiah's prophecies were directed against Ephraim, not Judah; (2) that the references in the later prophecies to the invincibility of Zion are non-Isaianic. These two positions can be best considered separately on their own merits. The one does not stand or fall with the other.

The early prophecies (before 732), according to Hackmann, who here substantially agrees in every positive respect with all modern critics, are i. 2-31, ii. 6-iv. 1, v.-viii. 18, ix. 8-21, xvii. 1-11. These he dates more precisely thus:<sup>1</sup> ix. 8-21, x. 4*b*, v. 25*b*-30—before the Syro-Ephraimitish alliance; xvii. 1-11, (i. 18-20)<sup>2</sup>—after the alliance but before the war; vii.-viii. 4—in immediate prospect of the attack on Jerusalem; viii. 5-18 (i. 21-31)—later in the course of the

<sup>1</sup> The connection between ix. 8-x. 4 and v. was already observed by Ewald. Giesebrecht and Hackmann have independently reached almost identical reconstructions. Thus ix. 8-21, x. 4, v. 25*b* (=x. 4*b*)-30 go together, being characterized by the refrain, "For all this His anger is not turned away," etc.; again, v. 1-25*a*, x. 1-3 were originally united, the whole being characterized by its several sections beginning with "Woe." (References in chap. ix. according to the English enumeration.)

<sup>2</sup> The dates of the bracketed passages are determined in part by the theory, which is based in the first instance on the prophecies the dates of which can be more decisively determined.

war ; (i. 2-17) also during the war ; (ii. 6-iv. 1, v. 1-24) after the war. Chap. vi., at whatever time written, refers to the opening of the prophet's career. Now of the two prophecies certainly dating from before the war one (xvii. 1-11) is entirely concerned with the fate of Ephraim—Ephraim's doom is fixed ; in the other, Judah is incidentally alluded to (ix. 21), but ver. 9 shows that the N. kingdom is the real subject of the prophecy, the purport of which agrees with that of xvii. 1-11. Before the war, therefore, Isaiah's theme was the speedy destruction of Ephraim.

Of his attitude towards Judah we first have evidence when Jerusalem was threatened by the allied forces ; what we conceive that attitude to have been depends on our interpretation of chap. vii.—especially of the much-vexed passage contained in vers. 10-17. It is here that Hackmann comes forward with fresh and interesting suggestions. Like Duhm (in his commentary) he omits vers. 15 and 17 as later interpolations,<sup>1</sup> and in a passage which, if it is to be interpreted at all, demands, as the best scholars candidly admit, assumptions of one kind or another—if not critical, then exegetical—it would be unwise to dismiss a theory merely because it assumes that certain verses have been interpolated. For, granted this assumption, others that must else be made can be dispensed with. Omitting the verses in question, chap. vii. may be summarized thus : Isaiah goes to Ahaz to inspire him with his own conviction that Judah is safe because Ephraim is doomed ; Ahaz declines to ask for a sign in proof of this ; but that he may be left without excuse for unbelief, Jehovah gives the sign<sup>2</sup> unasked, the prophet announcing it thus : Any

<sup>1</sup> No merely arbitrary proceeding to justify a theory. The custom by which the reason for a name immediately follows a name (cf. *e.g.* viii. 3, 4) renders ver. 15 suspicious ; and the remarkable "abruptness of the transition" in ver. 17 was long ago noticed by Prof. Cheyne in his commentary.

<sup>2</sup> Hackmann thus considers that the sign actually given was intended to prove precisely what the sign Ahaz was requested to demand would have proved,



maiden<sup>1</sup> now conceiving, when she bears her son may call his name "With us (viz. Judah) is God"; for before the child in question shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good the land (Syria and Ephraim) whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken (vii. 14-16). Then immediately follows in detail the description of desolated *Ephraim* (vers. 18-25). Thus, in chap. vii., as also in viii. 1-4, Isaiah's conviction of the approaching fall of the N. kingdom recurs; but, as yet, his expectation seems to be that Judah will take warning from Ephraim's fate, "return," and be saved. It is not till somewhat later that, convinced by the stern logic of facts—the actual appeal of Ahaz to Assyria, he abandons his hopeful tone, and for the first time definitely threatens Judah: Judah, he now declares, for having shared in Ephraim's sin of diplomacy, which from the prophetic standpoint is disloyalty to Jehovah, will share Ephraim's doom—the Assyrian flood will overflow from Ephraim into Judah (viii. 5-8). This changed standpoint appears also in vers. 11 ff., and in vers. 16-18 we see developing the new idea of the remnant as a party within Judah.

viz. Judah's safety, Ephraim's impotence; whereas, according to prevailing theories, Ahaz was offered a sign of Judah's safety, and, for refusing, was given a sign of Judah's ruin; such theories find greater support for this change than Hackmann seems inclined to admit, for ver. 9b certainly implies that the promise to Judah was conditional. The real questions at issue are therefore: Was it just the refusal of Ahaz to ask for a sign that filled up the cup of Judah's unbelief? Is the sign in ver. 14 most naturally interpreted as a promise or a threat?

<sup>1</sup> There is of course nothing new in regarding the article in העלמה (vii. 14) as generic, and so translating *any* maiden (cf. R. Smith, *Prophets*, pp. 272, 425). But if we thus determine to regard Immanuel as the name of any ordinary child, we must—to avoid the strong objection urged against this interpretation by Dr. Driver (*Isaiah*, p. 41)—read with Duhm in viii. 8, ארץ כי עמנואל ("the land; for God is with us" instead of "Thy land, O Immanuel") regarding ארץ כי עמנואל here and in ver. 10 as a gloss. The other objection generally raised against the above interpretation seems to me to possess little weight, and to rest mainly on a misapprehension of what a sign might be (cf. viii. 4, 18, 1 Sam. ii. 34, Exod. iii. 12—"token" (R.V.) same word as "sign" in Is. vii. 14). On this point Prof. Bevan has recently called attention to some very pertinent Arabic parallels—*v. Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. vi. (Oct., 1893), pp. 220-222

If this interpretation of the earlier prophecies be correct, chaps. ii., iii., v. naturally fall after the war; once convinced that Judah also was doomed to punishment, the prophet's eye became keener to observe the social abuses abounding in his own country; Ephraim does not cease to be the object of his denunciation—in chap. ii. it is chiefly referred to—but Judah is now also denounced either in common with Ephraim as in chap. ii., or by itself as in chaps. iii. and v.

The supposition that Ephraim is the subject of Isaiah's early prophecies throws fresh light also on the problem presented by the narrative of the call (chap. vi.). The prevailing gloom of the message there entrusted to the prophet, which is not greatly relieved by the ray of hope apparently found at the end of ver. 13, presents a striking contrast to the hopeful message with which Isaiah came to Ahaz (chap. vii.). The assumption, therefore, which has hitherto been general, that Judah is the object of the message in chap. vi., and also of the message in chap. vii. presents a serious difficulty, to explain which several theories have been suggested, the favourite one<sup>1</sup> being that chap. vi. was not actually written till many years after the call, and that the forebodings of those later years, occasioned by the obstinacy and lack of faith shown by Ahaz, have given to the narrative a darker colouring than it would otherwise have had. Hackmann can dispense with this and similar theories, for his view is that Ephraim and Ephraim only is referred to in chap. vi.; in favour of this it can be urged:—

(1) That the (apparently) earliest prophecies of Isaiah (ix. 8–21, xvii. 1–11) are exclusively concerned with Ephraim, with the circumstances of which they show an accurate acquaintance;

(2) That these prophecies betray the same judgment of Ephraim which, on the hypothesis, is found in chap. vi.,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ewald, *Propheten*, i. 321 ff.; Cheyne, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, i. 36 f.; G. A. Smith, *Book of Isaiah*, 57 f., 78 f.

while on the other hand the earliest judgment of Judah is hopeful ;

(3) That in this way Isaiah's prophetic task would at first have been one with that of his two predecessors Amos (also a man of Judah) and Hosea, both of whom prophesied primarily and almost exclusively against Ephraim.

It might be added that in this way chap. vi. forms an excellent introduction to chap. vii., where the doom of Ephraim is a guiding principle. Further, since in this case we can readily believe the prediction was one of absolute extermination, we are free to accept the evidence of the LXX.<sup>1</sup> that the last clause of ver. 13 ("so the holy seed is the stock thereof") is not original. With its omission the verse and the figure it contains become clear: the felling of the tree corresponds to the first destruction (vers. 11, 12), the burning of the stump to the burning up (R.V. marg. ver. 13) of the tenth remaining over from the former destruction, "And if there be yet a tenth in it, it shall again be devoured, as is the case with a terebinth . . . whereof, at the felling, a stump (remaineth over)."

Thus in dealing with these earlier prophecies, and in order to justify his conclusion that Ephraim alone is at first regarded by Isaiah as irrevocably doomed, Hackmann requires to assume comparatively few glosses—the chief being vii. 15, 17, viii. 8, 9 and vi. 13*b*, in which last case he is supported by the LXX. Since in this way he both simplifies the exegesis of vi. 13 and vii. 10–17, and does away with perhaps greater assumptions otherwise necessary, he seems to me to have rendered this part of his theory probable; and he has, at the very least, done a service in drawing attention to the extent to which Isaiah at the outset of his career came into line with his predecessors in making the N. kingdom the object of his attack.

<sup>1</sup> An omission in the LXX. of Isaiah deserves attention, since the tendency of the translation is to amplify.

When, however, we come to examine the means by which he establishes his other position—that the doctrine of the Invincibility of Zion is not Isaianic—we find that far greater assumptions of interpolation and working over have to be made. It is impossible here to state or to criticise in any detail what can be said for these assumptions; it is moreover questionable whether their validity can be finally estimated, till all apparently intrusive matter in all other prophetic writings has been subjected to careful comparative examination. It must suffice here to state the passages rejected by Hackmann in the later prophecies; they are these—x. 20–27, xviii. 7, xxviii. 5, 6 (and possibly 23–29), xxix. 16–24 (at least for the most part), xxx. 18–33, xxxi. 5–9, xxxii. 1–8 (but probably not 9–20). Read with these omissions, the prophecies of the age of Sennacherib speak only of the certainty of Judah's destruction, not at all of the safety of Zion; then chap. x. presents us with a change of the prophet's attitude towards Assyria, but not, as has generally been supposed, of a change also in his opinion as to the fate of Jerusalem; then, too, the reference to the *destruction of Zion* (xxxii. 13, 14) is what we should expect, and the last utterance of the prophet that the people's sin shall not be forgiven till they die (xxii. 14) forms the natural close to the prophet's teaching. These omissions certainly simplify matters; of many of the difficulties due to the continuous interlacing of judgment and promise in chaps. xxviii.–xxxii., with which commentators have had to busy themselves, we should be rid if we could regard the passages of promise as non-Isaianic; but undoubtedly very strong reasons are necessary if we are to reject a whole series of passages many of which are closely interwoven with those still retained as genuine, and connected with one another by common ideas. Why, it may fairly be asked, just in Isaiah's prophecies should passages containing the doctrine of the Invincibility of Zion be embodied, and not, *e.g.*, in

Micah? In fairness to the theory it must however be mentioned that not all these passages can be regarded from Hackmann's standpoint as *interpolations*; if he is right, chaps. xxviii.—xxxii. originally existed as a separate collection of prophetic writings—in part by Isaiah, in part by others—made long after Isaiah's time; it would therefore be as unsuitable to term the non-Isaianic passages there found interpolations, as to say that, *e.g.*, chaps. xxiv.—xxvii. or xl.—lxvi. have been *interpolated* in the book of Isaiah. Full justice can in fact only be done, especially to this part of Hackmann's theory, by a study of his careful and suggestive discussion of the composition of the Book of Isaiah. The same must be said of his still more radical suggestion that the passages referring to the Messianic king (ix. 1–7, xi. 1–11) are non-Isaianic.

Perhaps the chief conclusion to be drawn from the preceding survey, will appear to be that it is impossible to trace the development of Isaiah's thought with any certainty. To some extent this is at present true; but we may yet hope by more systematic study of the composition of the prophetic books, by a careful comparative exegesis of apparently intrusive matter in each prophet's writings, and perhaps by further archæological discovery which will determine with greater certainty the dates of the respective prophecies, to be ultimately in a position to trace more accurately the growth of Isaiah's doctrine. Meantime discussions such as those that have been noticed are of value; for, as Hackmann justly observes, the tracing of individual religious ideas and critical analysis may and must at present go together. Methods which have proved successful in Pentateuchal studies should now be applied to the prophetic writings. It is as a careful attempt to do this that I have desired to gain for Dr. Hackmann's essay the attention of readers of THE EXPOSITOR.

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