

PROBLEMS OF THE PROPHETIC LITERATURE.

I. ISAIAH.

THE problems of the prophetic literature have received less than their fair amount of attention. There was a time when the same remark might have been made respecting the problems of the narrative portions of the Old Testament. When Ewald's influence waned, the effect was soon seen in the new spirit which animated Hexateuch criticism, and when Dillmann's influence is checked by some stronger one, which may be that of a group of workers rather than of an individual, the effect will be seen in the advances which will be made in the criticism of the prophets. Dillmann was essentially a transitional critic, and as such he was indispensable. He had, no doubt, fine qualities which in any period would be of priceless value, but from the point of view of the larger (not to say higher) criticism he was transitional. It would be unfortunate that he should be too much deferred to in England, if we wish to make good our claim to be critical scholars like the Germans, and therefore I will at once say that, high as is my own veneration for Dillmann, I would gladly enlist comrades in the work of carrying prophetic criticism to a point much beyond the resting-places devised by that relatively open-minded representative of the past. Not as though I were not equally interested in the progress of other portions of the larger criticism, but just at present I limit myself to a subject which pressingly needs a renewed critical investigation.

Mr. Gray, one of those younger scholars who have or should have the advantage of starting free from the theories

of the past, has already described and commented upon some of the bold but not arbitrary hypotheses of Hackmann (see EXPOSITOR, November, 1894, p. 334). Cordial thanks to him for his work! It is not, however, the hypotheses of any one scholar that I have set myself to expound, but a view of the composition of Isaiah, which is as much my own as any critical view formed at this period of a century-old movement can be that of an individual. Though delighted to learn from Hackmann or from Duhm, my own work is far older than that of the first, and not more recent (if not of somewhat earlier origin) than that of the second. Having lately brought it to a provisional close,¹ and being well aware that on many points conference is needed with fellow-students, I wish to save time by mentioning some of these points. Now I count it wholly unnecessary to slay the slain, and therefore remark at the outset that the one question of questions is, not whether certain parts of our Book of Isaiah do, or do not, belong to a period later than B.C. 586, but whether, in addition to certain passages written at the close of the Exile, a number of post-Exilic passages have not found admission both into 1 and into 2 Isaiah. To an able French scholar's indignant exclamation, "Et c'est ainsi qu'au nom de l'histoire on détruit l'histoire,"² I reply with a quotation from Geiger, "The Bible (of the Jews) is and at all times was a Word full of fresh life, not a dead book. This everlasting Word belonged not to a particular age; it could not be dependent (for its meaning) on the time when it was written down, and as little, upon this theory, could it be without what seemed to be new truths and new discoveries. Hence every period, every school, every individuality introduced into the Bible its own way of regarding the contents of the Bible. In later times this took place in the field of

¹ See the author's forthcoming *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah* (A. and C. Black).

² A. Westphal.

exegesis, but before that, when the Bible had not yet attained an absolutely fixed form, the same result was reached by manipulation of the text. Thus the Bible became the full expression of the higher life of the people. That which seemed deficient in the text of the holy book, the national spirit innocently supplied, and, unconscious of any breach of law, impressed its own stamp on the traditional text." Must not the editors of Isaiah, including him who brought together the two parts of our Book of Isaiah, have worked in this spirit? The Book of Isaiah comes to us from post-Exilic times; on this point there can be no doubt among educated students. It was brought into its present form, not by a committee of lovers of ancient literature, but by men whose great preoccupation was the building up of a righteous, God-fearing people. To this we may add that the editors of Isaiah held a view of prophecy which differed widely from that held by the prince of prophets, and which approximated to that which most preachers and teachers of our day are doing their best to correct. It was no longer in their view the glory of a prophet that he declared the will and purpose of God to the Israel of his own day, but that "by a great spirit he saw the last things" (Ecclus. xlviii. 24). The question therefore for modern students of Isaiah to consider is this, "Must not the works both of 1 and 2 Isaiah have been adapted to the wants of the Palestinian Jews of the post-Exilic period by the insertion of fresh passages, inspired by what the later Jews called technically the holy spirit (*i.e.*, the spirit of prophecy), relative to the hopes and fears, the merits and demerits, of the post-Exilic church-nation"? If we reply in the affirmative, it is plain that we can no longer assume that a prophecy is Isaianic unless it contains something flagrantly opposed to this assumption (such as the mention of Cyrus or an Aramaic loan-word), but have simply to consider to what period the circumstances presup-

posed, the beliefs and ideas, and the linguistic and literary phenomena (including rhythm) most naturally assign it.

It is important, therefore, for the advanced study of Isaiah that the results of the criticism of the other parts of the Old Testament, so ably and so moderately summed up by Kuenen in his introduction,¹ should first be duly assimilated. Not as though this invaluable work were perfect, but there is at any rate no other book which initiates the student nearly as well into the present state of knowledge and the problems which await solution. It needs, of course, to be supplemented (1) by a picture of the development of Israel's religious ideas (a purely religious teacher might prefer another phrase) from a similar point of view to Kuenen's, and (2) by something analogous to Schürer's admirable *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte*, i.e., a history (so far as this is possible) of the external events which form the setting of the great movement of ideas referred to. The former of these themes has been finely handled in Smend's *Lehrbuch*; ² the latter would probably receive adequate treatment, could Stade be induced, in collaboration with archæological specialists, to bring out a new edition of his celebrated *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*.

I have myself done what I could to improve on the imperfect archæological treatment of Isaiah in my earlier work. I hold with Kuenen that the distinction sometimes drawn between literary and historical criticism, or criticism of the form and of the contents of the Old Testament

¹ Dr. Driver's fact-full work will, I hope, whet the appetite for Kuenen's more satisfactory because in its theories more consistent Introduction. The first part of vol. i. of the latter has been translated into English (Macmillan, 1886). An authorized German version of the entire work (so far as Kuenen had completed it) was published in 1893-1894. For the most recent progress the oral teaching of a competent teacher is of course the only substitute for a wide and intelligent reading.

² This work deserved the translation which it has not found. It has the alternative titles, *Old Testament History of Religion* and *Old Testament Theology*. The former appears deserving of preference.

books, however plausible, is both wrong in itself and impracticable, and that every step we take in the criticism of the contents will assist us in that of the form (and *vice versa*). Hence the best critics of our day are able to profit by Assyriology much more than they could ten or fifteen years ago; nor have the researches into primitive Semitic culture carried on by Robertson Smith and Wellhausen been by any means without their effect on critical theories. In the use of the archæological evidence, however, circumspection is requisite. Mischief is sometimes wrought by giving precedence to the real or supposed archæological evidence over that derived from language and beliefs, ideas and general situation.

I will now mention some of the chief problems which require, in my opinion, special and prolonged attention. First, is the fine prophecy of the spiritual primacy of Jerusalem in Isaiah ii. 2-4 the work of Isaiah or of a post-Exilic critic? Duhm, from a somewhat surprising excess of caution, adopts the former alternative. To me, however, it has long appeared that there was greatly preponderating evidence for the latter. Verses 29-31 of chapter i. are possibly best understood as a fragment of the close of a lost prophecy of Isaiah against Israelitish idolatry, which the editor linked to the preceding discourse by the two poor and almost demonstrably late verses 27 and 28. Most probably ii. 2-4 (= Mic. iv. 1-3), together with Micah iv. 4, once stood after i. 29-31. It was, if not written, at any rate placed there by the late editor, in the spirit of the passage quoted above from Geiger, to mitigate a threatening which seemed too strong for the pious believers of the church-nation. Verse 5 is, beyond doubt, a linking verse, added when the prophecy in ii. 2-4 received its present position. I should much like trained students to consider the evidence for this and for the post-Exilic origin of the Messianic prophecy in iv. 2-6, which will be given elsewhere.

Next, can we safely regard the more strictly Messianic prophecies in ix. 1-6, and xi. 1-8, as Isaianic? Habit makes it hard for us to do otherwise, but Hackmann has produced evidence to show that it is post-Exilic, and I am afraid that Isaiah's authorship is more than doubtful. Even if Gunkel be right in supposing that the description of the coming golden age is based on a primitive myth, it is plain that this does not prove the passage (and its context) to be Isaiah's, or even to be pre-Exilic at all. There was, as I think that I have conclusively proved, a revival of mythology in the Babylonian period of Israelitish history, and the idea that the early history of the world is typical of the events of the latter days, is, so far as I can see, distinctively late. It is true that Hackmann's linguistic evidence with reference to the two prophecies needs sifting; but his argument, which I have adopted elsewhere, may on the whole be sound.

Passing over the interesting critical problems of chap. x., I pause next at chaps. xix. and xxiii., with regard to which I venture to ask whether a post-Exilic date is not after all more probable, even for xix. 1-15, than the date which, in deference to Assyriological evidence, I offered in 1892, viz., the time of the conquest of Egypt by Assurbanipal. The epilogue, I presume, is undoubtedly of the early Greek period. I also ask whether chap. xxiii. 1-14 must not in its present form be post-Exilic? I have myself endeavoured, following Dillmann, to show that there is an Isaianic basis, but I am rather doubtful of this view, and fear that this is only a possibility. Is this hesitation endorsed by other students?

That chaps. xxiv., xxv. 6-8, xxvi. 20, 21, xxvii. 1, 12, 13, is a genuine early apocalypse (in a wide sense of the term) appears to me absolutely certain, and I am gratified to have Professor Kirkpatrick's support in referring it to the fourth century B.C., though this slowly moving scholar

has not had occasion, like Duhm and myself, to attempt an analysis of the group to which it now belongs. Chap. xxvii. 7-11 seems a fragment of a longer poem of very slightly later date, and the liturgical meditation in xxvi. 1-19, together with the three songs (xxv. 1-5*a*, xxv. 9-11, and xxvii. 2-5), seem contemporary with it. The difference of date may be small, but the Persian empire had certainly fallen, and the Greek empire risen in its place, when the portions just mentioned were composed. A later editor arranged the passages as they now stand. The evidence for this is my own, but the results would hardly have been reached without the help of Duhm's analysis. They appear to me important, and relatively conservative.

In the criticism of chaps. xxviii.-xxxiii., I shall, I fear, be regarded as revolutionary. But I am at least no nihilist, and the results, if correct, are of the utmost importance for the history of the higher religion of Israel. Nowhere has the hand of the editor been busier than here. Even xxviii. 1-6 has been edited later, while the proverbial poem in verses 23-29 is demonstrably Exilic or post-Exilic. Of xxix. 1-8, the same account must be given as of the opening verses of chap. xxviii. Our eyes are so dimmed by conventionality that it requires a strong effort to see the unnaturalness of the ordinary solution. But when we have once realised what it means to ascribe final production of our Book of Isaiah to post-Exilic editors, it will be seen that the evidence for non-Isaianic origin is indeed overwhelmingly strong. Chap. xxix. 16-24, and xxx. 18-26, must also be post-Exilic. If the student will only read these passages in the light of similar passages of acknowledged post-Exilic origin, he will only wonder that the discovery was left for the end of the nineteenth century. But I am quite willing to be contradicted, and, if possible, refuted, with regard to the five passages, xxx. 27-33, which, in spite of a pronounced mythical colouring, I believe with

Hackmann to be post-Exilic. Let the evidence be slowly and carefully weighed by those who are accustomed to this kind of argument, and know their Kuenen well.

Chaps. xxxii. and xxxiii. are full of interesting problems. The period of the latter is important to settle, for no more characteristically post-Exilic passage, as some critics maintain, exists, and the question (as Dalman rightly points out) has a bearing on the date of those interesting psalms, xlvi. and xlviii., which cannot easily be shown to be pre-Exilic. Students may also be asked to decide whether Duhm can be right in attempting to rescue some parts of chap. xxxii. for Isaiah. To me it appears that, even if the Messianic prophecies in chaps. ix. and xi. be recognised as possibly Isaiah's work, the admission can, on critical grounds, hardly extend to the Messianic portion of chap. xxxii.

Chaps. xxxiv. and xxxv. I have doubtfully placed as early as 450-430 B.C. But if the Massoretic text of xxxiv. 16a be accepted, some readers will probably hold that this date is too early, and that these closely related compositions are works of the Greek period.¹ To the Greek period, at any rate, must (it would seem) be due the appending by an editor of the narrative chapters xxxvi.-xxxix., which, though ultimately derived from prophetic biographies, are, as they now stand, by no means entirely historical. A full investigation of the origin of these chapters requires a more careful treatment of their historicity than previous scholars have given. Gladly would we hold to such a wonderful proof of "God in history" as the received belief requires, but can we do so? And is He who "only doeth great wonders" compelled to do them on such a grand physical scale? Failing any reason to the contrary, the final redaction of Isaiah may be assigned, like xix. 16-25, to the

¹ There are two ways of avoiding this influence. One is to amend the text by the help of the LXX.; the other is to omit either *v.* 16a or *vv.* 16-17 as a late insertion. I cannot, however, see my way to adopt either.

second half of the third century (say 250-220 B.C.). I need hardly state that this decision is only a probable one. It agrees with the generally accepted view of the date of the (provisional) close of the prophetic canon. But a still later date is not absolutely impossible.

Proceeding to the second volume of Isaiah, viz., chaps. xl-lxvi., I am embarrassed by the number of the interesting problems which present themselves. I have, however, shown long ago that this work does not possess either unity of action or unity of historic background, and, so far as the critical analysis is concerned, need only say here that, while agreeing with Duhm (1) that chaps. xl.-lv. contain, besides the prophecy of comfort, a cycle of poems on the "Servant of Yahwè (Jehovah)," and that this prophecy (if not also the poems) belongs to the close of the Exilic, and (2) that chaps. lvi.-lxvi. are of post-Exilic origin. I am not at all convinced by his argument for regarding the latter chapters as a literary whole, produced by a single writer called the *Trite-Isaiah*. To me the second part appears to consist of about ten compositions, which proceed from the same school (hence their resemblances), and several of which may possibly come from the same writer. Most of them too belong to the age of Nehemiah. I ought, however, to add that a thorough analysis of chaps. xl.-lv. (attempted first of all by Duhm) reveals the fact that, partly for edification, partly with the view of filling up illegible passages, post-Exilic editors have made a number of insertions even in the Exilic prophecy of the restoration of Israel. The most remarkable of these occur in chap. xlvi., where the post-Exilic editor has (as it appears to me) demonstrably interlaced the second Isaiah's work with severe reproachful remarks addressed to his contemporaries, who had fallen back, as he considered, into obstinate unbelief. This view of the passage is due to Duhm, though Bredenkamp before him had divided chap. xlvi. between

Isaiah and 2 Isaiah. Dr. C. H. H. Wright has also lately taken up a position which reminds us of both scholars. "The phraseology," he says, "is Isaianic, worked over by a later hand, prophetic text and prophetic comment being so intermixed, that they cannot be separated." This "later hand" is post-Exilic, though "the thoughts and verbiage (?) are still mainly Isaianic."¹ It is plain that neither Bredenkamp's view nor that of Wright is tenable. The reader will do well to take this passage in connexion with x. 20-23 (also probably post-Exilic).

The importance of these questions will be fully seen whenever the student attempts to frame for himself a picture of the course of the development of religion in Exilic and post-Exilic, on the basis of the analysis here presented in its outlines. The discussion which they require involves decisions on many difficult points, on some of which even those who on the whole agree in their critical presuppositions may fairly differ. I have not ventured upon these with a light heart, but claim the respect which is due to all patient and independent critical work. Perhaps I should add that one of these critical decisions refers to a point on what I would gladly first of all have heard the judgment of Professor H. E. Ryle. Should the excellent editor of *Ezra and Nehemiah*, in the *Cambridge Bible Commentary*, convince me that I am wrong, he will not thereby have materially injured my theory of the origin of 2 Isaiah, but he will have deprived the historical picture which this theory suggests of some of its distinctness. Let me explain myself, so far as this is possible, within a very brief compass.

It is hardly necessary to remark that the Books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* do not present a thoroughly consistent view of the events of the Restoration period. Schrader long ago found reason to suppose that the foundation of the

¹ *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. 2, i., 1469.

temple was ante-dated by the Chronicler in Ezra iii. 8-13, and his arguments have been admitted by men of such different schools as Kuenen, Stade, Ryssel, and König. This, however, was only the beginning of a series of critical inquiries, conducted by van Hoonacker, Kuenen, Sir H. H. Howorth, and Kuenen's able successor at Leyden, Kosters. The last-named scholar has profited much by the work of his predecessors, and, as it seems to me, has reached conclusions which are in the main solid.¹ Like Schrader and Kuenen, he is of opinion that the temple was rebuilt in 520-516 B.C., under Darius Hystaspis; but the builders, as he seems to have proved, were not the Gôla or (returned) exiles, but that part of the Judahite population which had not been carried away to Babylon. The sources of the Chronicler, preserved in Ezra v. and vi., know nothing of a return of the Gôla prior to the rebuilding of the sanctuary. Nor is there any sound evidence that it was the Gôla which rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem; Ezra iv. 6-23 (which probably means to assert the rebuilding of the walls by Ezra and his companions) is in conflict with Nehemiah i. 1-vii. 5. In 445, Nehemiah, on his arrival from Susa, found the walls unbuilt, and no Gôla in Jerusalem. Very soon, however, the walls were built, *i.e.*, by the same Judahite population which had already erected the temple. Now the glorification of Jerusalem, promised by 2 Isaiah, appeared a little more possible. It was not, however, till Nehemiah's second visit (432) that the great want of Jerusalem—that of an increased and of a more strictly religious population—was satisfied. Soon after the great governor's return, Ezra, "the scribe," arrived with a caravan of exiles from Babylonia. Now it became possible to counteract the uni-dealistic spirit of the old Judahite population. And though

¹ See *Het Herstel van Israël in het Perzische Tijdvak* (Leiden, 1894), a most able specimen of analysis, which has already received from some of the best critics the recognition which it deserves.

even Ezra failed at first to achieve the separation of the lower elements, he succeeded in forming a *kāhāl* (קָהָל) or congregation, which had the consciousness of being the people of God—the true Israel. Then came Ezra's introduction of the law-book—how soon after, we know not—and by degrees the Kahal absorbed the best element of Jewish society, not, however, so completely (as later passages in 2 Isaiah show) as to exclude the possibility of opposition and reaction.

To us this course of things may appear in a high degree natural; but to the Chronicler, as Kusters rightly observes, it was incredible that the poor country-folk (וְיִלְתֵּי הָאָרֶץ, 2 Kings xxiv. 14, xxv. 12) should have done so much for their religion. The Gôla was in his eyes the only possible doer of great deeds. And so, after rewriting the early history of his people, the Chronicler quite innocently transformed to a great extent the annals of his own time. Kusters deserves warm thanks for opening up this matter. For my own part, I think that he has in the main points proved his case. I would not indeed deny the possibility that a scanty band of exiles may have returned under Cyrus. The famous cylinder inscription (as Wildeboer has pointed out) suggests that the opportunity of return was really given, and it is not easy to believe that no Israelites availed themselves of it. Nor can Haggai and Zechariah, as it appears to me, be supposed to have grown up in the low-minded and uncultured community to which their prophecies are addressed. But if any exiles did return before 432, they were not strong enough to neutralize the downward tendency of those who had been left behind by the stern Babylonian invader.

All this has a direct and powerful bearing on the interpretation of chaps. lvi.-lxvi., though I cannot stay to explain it. The influence of the Samaritans, or half-Jews, can now be much better understood, and the phenomena

of such a passage as chaps. lx.-lxii., which once appeared to me to be a fragment of the genuine 2 Isaiah, can now probably be seen in their true light. Let the student weigh the evidence upon sound critical principles—not those which are at present most popular among us, but those which the trained commonsense of consistent criticism has used with such great results—and judge. Should they correct any errors of mine, they will earn my warm thanks. Should they see that even a part of my own results are true, I shall have earned theirs. And in the latter case, they need not apprehend the least injury to true edification. Like Hagar's angel, the advanced criticism of devout-minded students opens up the view of unsuspected "wells of water"; and he who allows it to revolutionize his theory of the Book of Isaiah will feel the true Isaiah of Jerusalem, and the true Second Isaiah of Babylon, becoming more and not less of prophets to himself—more and not less capable of bringing men near to the self-revealing God.

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