

# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

PROFESSOR NOWACK of Strassburg has undertaken the editorship of a new series of Commentaries on the Old Testament, to be issued under the general title of *Handkommentar zum Alten Testament*. Two volumes have already appeared—the *Psalms*, by Professor Baethgen of Griefswald, and *Isaiah*, by Professor Duhm of Basel. Both are examined in the current issue of *The Critical Review*, the former by Professor Cheyne, and the latter by Professor Davidson.

Professor Davidson has good hopes of some of the contributors. "Every one will rejoice that Budde, who has already made noteworthy contributions to the exposition of Job, has made himself responsible for that Book; something in advance of all previous studies, particularly in the region of the criticism of Job, may confidently be expected." But not of all. Dr. P. T. Arndt has been entrusted with Ezekiel. "Arndt," he says, "has already written a tract, called *The Place of Ezekiel in Old Testament Prophecy*, which is perhaps the most prejudiced and ill-informed thing ever written even on Ezekiel. At the time of writing it, however, he appears to have read only Smend's Commentary; when he comes to read the prophet's own writings he will do better. And, no doubt, the editor will take care that notes of startling originality, like one in the tract, 'The Ethical Dative, an Aramaism,' shall occur only in

moderate quantity, in conformity with the idea of a Hand-commentar."

Professor Davidson examines Duhm's *Isaiah* at considerable length. And in the course of his examination he says some things which ought to make certain victorious critics—Duhm included—pause and think again. We all admit the liberty of criticism now—none more rejoicingly than Professor Davidson. And timid critics of just intention need not fear that all its ways will henceforth become a laughter and a reproach. But there was a thing which needed greatly to be done. Professor Driver began to do it in our own pages two months ago. And Professor Davidson here helps it on to most unmistakable effect. We mean the separation between criticism that is fair, and criticism that is preposterous and incredible.

Duhm's criticism is not all preposterous and incredible. That could not well be, since his principles are right in the main. But in the application of these principles he works out results which Professor Davidson very lucidly shows cannot at present be accepted by any literary or sane person. "Looking down Duhm's translation with its variety of type, indicative of the same or a greater variety of authors, we discover that there is hardly a chapter in Isaiah, and in some passages hardly a line, which has not been patched and

clouded by successive cobblers. One cannot but ask, Is there any literary analogy to this? Has any other literature been subjected to similar treatment? We know, for example, how it fared with New Testament MSS., the kind and the source of changes introduced into them, and no one would deny that similar comparison of Book with Book, and consequent amplifications of the text, perhaps even on a larger scale, might have taken place in Old Testament MSS. But this has no resemblance to the pervasive over-working of the ancient texts assumed by Duhm."

Duhm's principles are right in the main. They are three in number. The first is that where a text is untranslatable it has probably been corrupted, since it is reasonable to suppose that the author wrote his own language correctly. The second is that the laws of Hebrew metre may be used as a means of testing the correctness of the text. And the third, that a critic "must take note of the religious sentiments and modes of thought occurring in a passage, as well as the phraseology in which they are expressed, and assign the passage to the age or period when such thoughts and language are from other sources known to have prevailed."

These rules, says Professor Davidson, are unimpeachable. And yet he has little difficulty in showing that they are all very liable to abuse, and are actually abused here by Duhm. Take the first: If the text is not good Hebrew it is probably corrupt. But remember that "the literature preserved in the Bible is but a scanty thesaurus of the Hebrew *language*. From the nature of the case, both forms and constructions will occur in single examples, which a more ample literature might have shown to be not uncommon. The cry of 'unhebräisch' is becoming too customary. The critical gamekeepers who raise it are comparable only to gamekeepers of another sort, who shoot down every creature of God which does not show the familiar grey of the grouse." Or take the second: That Hebrew poets must be shown to

obey the laws of Hebrew metre. But, in the first place, prophecy is often only half poetical in form; and, in the second place, Hebrew poetry of the most conventional type, like the Book of Lamentations, often allows great variety in the length of the lines.

But it is the third rule that opens the door to abuse most widely. You are in front of a chapter in Isaiah. You wish to ascertain its date as a piece of writing. The language is some guide, perhaps, but often enough it admits no confident test and produces no assured results. What then? Test the writing by its theology. What religious ideas has this chapter? Are they in advance of the religious ideas of the time it has been supposed to belong to? Are they behind? Its place will be determined accordingly. Under any circumstances it is a ticklish test enough. But the real hazard lies in this, that every critic has his own conception both of the rate of progress of revelation or religious development in Israel, and even of the relation in time which certain marked religious ideas have to one another. One critic says that the idea of immortality, to take a broad example, arose at a certain comparatively early date; another, that it first appears very late in time. How can both find the same results as regards the date of the chapter in Isaiah, supposing that it touches on this subject?

But the test of a principle is the application of it. Professor Davidson gives a few pertinent examples,—we strongly recommend our readers to see the whole admirable article for themselves,—we shall rest content with one. It is Isaiah iii. 10, 11: "Say ye of the righteous, that it shall be well with him . . . woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." What is the doctrine of this passage? It is the doctrine of individual retribution. But Duhm holds that that doctrine did not appear in Israel till, at any rate, after the Exile. Before the Exile it is the nation that sins and the nation that suffers, the nation that receives the reward of its righteousness. Accordingly, this passage is relegated to a post-Exilic date.

“Assuming the correctness of the author’s exegesis,” says Dr. Davidson, “does he not push the idea, true within limits, that the individual had significance only as part of the state, to an extravagant length? The woman of Zarepta said to Elijah: ‘Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and slay my son?’ This heathen woman was familiar with the idea of individual retribution. And one would like to know what David thought of the relation of the death of his child to his sin. The passage (Amos ix. 9, 10) might be referred to, but no doubt Duhm would draw his pen through it. It is true the prophets deal with the state and threaten it with destruction from the Assyrian. But the Assyrian was not the only instrument in God’s hand. And if the idea of the Kingdom of God and its destinies absorbed the prophets, this does not forbid that other ideas on different lines may have been contemporaneous. If Professor Duhm be right, Israel must have stood on a lower level than any nation under heaven, and Elijah’s landlady had a much deeper religious insight than himself.”

To sum up. The inevitable, and yet none the less startling result of Duhm’s criticism of Isaiah, is that as many as twelve or fourteen chapters of the first part of Isaiah are thrown into the Maccabean period, while it was not till that age that *any* of Isaiah’s prophecies were gathered together. “What a glorious view the Maccabean age presents to our admiring eyes! How rich the period was in literature! The great writers on the Psalter have shown us how every skirmish of the day had its poet, and how every rise and fall in the spirits of the little army have been photographed in the Psalms which we sing. And now Professor Duhm draws the curtain aside and exhibits a company of Prophets no less numerous than the Poets we knew before. Now we realise how that extraordinary prophecy, Isaiah xix. 24, came to be uttered: ‘In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that the Lord of Hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people,

and Assyria (*i.e.* Syria) the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.’ The occasion of it was that Jonathan, the Maccabee, was invited to the wedding of Alexander Balas the Syrian usurper, with Cleopatra daughter of the king of Egypt. Such a meeting of such a three could mean nothing less than that the kingdoms of the earth would speedily be the kingdoms of the Lord. One thing is difficult to understand amidst this wealth of prophecy,” concludes Dr. Davidson, “namely, how the people should be so often represented in the Book of Maccabees as complaining and lamenting that they had no prophet. Had they, perhaps, the same opinion of their prophets as Professor Duhm has—that they were sterile in imagination and solecists in style?”

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Is there any greater revolution in our day than that which is passing over the interpretation of prophecy? Compare the methods of prophetic interpretation which commended themselves to the mind of one who has just passed away from us, Dr. Andrew Bonar, with those which are advocated by Professor Kirkpatrick. Dr. Bonar was a ripe scholar, and an honest student of the Word. So is Dr. Kirkpatrick. And yet, in the interpretation of prophecy, they speak to one another in an unknown tongue.

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Professor Kirkpatrick has just published his Warburtonian Lectures. They are the deliberate result of many years’ able and most reverent study of the prophets of the Old Testament. But what would the late Dr. Bonar have thought of his interpretation of a prophecy to him so directly and vitally Messianic as that in the seventh chapter of Isaiah, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel”? “It is clear,” says Dr. Kirkpatrick, “that these words were not in their original intention a prediction of the miraculous birth of Jesus.” Indeed, the point of the “sign,” he proceeds to show, lay neither in the mother’s virginity, nor in the child’s birth.

It did not lie in the virginity of the mother. There is no evidence, he says, that the prophet intended to represent the mother as a virgin. The Hebrew word rendered *virgin* in the Authorised Version would be more accurately rendered *damsel*. It means a young woman of marriageable age, and is not the word which would naturally be used for *virgin*, if that were the point which it was desired to emphasise."

Nor did the significance of the sign lie in any other circumstances connected with the birth of the child. It lay in something that was to happen before the child came to years of discretion. "Some mother, known to Ahaz and the prophet, but of whom we know nothing, who was soon to give birth to a child, or possibly any woman who was about to become a mother, is told that she may call her son Immanuel—*Immānū El*, 'God is with us.'" She may with confidence give him this name, significant of the presence of God with His people. For, before the child comes to years of discretion, the presence of God will be signally manifested in judgment. The judgment will be twofold. In the first place, the land of Pekah and of Rezin, the two kings whom Ahaz now dreads, will be laid waste. But, on the other hand, Judah herself will become as a wilderness (a situation which the prophet artistically represents by making the child feed on curds and honey, the produce of rough uncultivated pasture land), and that at the hand of him from whom Ahaz was now foolishly looking for help, the king of Assyria.

Thus there is a double edge to the prophecy. There is deliverance, and there is judgment—deliverance from Syria, judgment from the great king of Assyria, the prince in whom Ahaz is determined to put confidence, rather than trust in the LORD. And the sign with this double significance is the growing boy with his immortal name of Immanuel.

If this view is correct, it is manifest that this cannot be what is called a direct prophecy of the

birth of the Messiah. For, if its first fulfilment was to take place in Bethlehem seven centuries hence, it could not possibly be a sign to Ahaz. "It is no more a direct prophecy of the Messiah," says Professor Kirkpatrick, "and of the miraculous manner of His birth, than the second psalm is a direct prophecy of the Resurrection, or Hosea xi. 1 a direct prophecy of the Flight into Egypt."

Nevertheless, Dr. Kirkpatrick finds a true fulfilment both of psalm and of sign in the Messiah—not the first, but the final and the fullest. For, "as the words, which in the psalm referred primarily to the adoptive sonship of the king, are applied in the New Testament to the eternal Sonship of Christ, so the name given as the pledge of the presence of God with His people becomes the name of Him who was the Mediator of that presence. The words describing His birth receive a profound depth of meaning, which they admit, though they do not necessarily convey it. The name itself becomes the expression of the mysterious fact of the Incarnation. Jesus is the true Immanuel, and in Him the prophet's utterance is fulfilled."

Rather more than a year ago a great modern painter, who is himself an intensely earnest Christian, when painting a picture of Christ before Pilate, represented Christ as a Socialist leader. The picture was exhibited in some of the cities of the Continent, and working-men in thousands went to gaze upon it. And at Hamburg the working-men subscribed a large sum in order to secure that the picture should be brought back to their city and exhibited a few weeks longer.

That, says the Rev. W. Moore Ede, is a sign of the times. He tells the story in the course of a remarkable sermon which he preached before the University of Cambridge on the 4th of December last. That sermon is itself as significant a sign of the times as the great painter's picture.

Mr. Ede entered the University pulpit with a clear and pressing message. He sought his text

in the last great discourse of our Lord as recorded in St. Luke. These are the marvellous words: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke xxi. 25-28).

Have these things ever yet come to pass? Yes, answers Mr. Ede, thrice at least, and now for the fourth time they are beginning to come to pass again.

These things began to come to pass first in the seventieth year after the birth of Christ, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus. "In the passage before us Jesus plainly told His disciples that in that great national catastrophe which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, they were to behold the coming of Christ." Again, these things came to pass at the close of the sixth century, when horde after horde of heathen warriors swept down upon what was left of the decaying civilisation of the Roman Empire. Then they came to pass at the end of the eighteenth century, and the nation upon which the distress and perplexity fell most terribly was France. And now, says Mr. Ede, we are at the end of another century, and the signs are all around us that these things are about to come to pass again.

All around us, he says, are signs that we are in one of those crises which are the birth-pangs of a new life. And the first sign he names is that "the Bishops of the Anglican Communion meeting at Lambeth" are conscious of it. Next, that "Bishop Westcott, sitting in the seat of St. Cuthbert, in his recent masterly charge," took notice of it. And thirdly, that "the Pope, looking out from his

watch-tower in that city which once ruled the world," issues his Encyclical letter to meet it.

So it is the "Social Question" that will bring on the great crisis of our day; and the distress and perplexity that lie in wait for us will issue from the struggle between poverty and wealth. And surely Mr. Ede is right. We have been so proud of progress, so boastful of increasing wealth, so arrogant about the advance of civilisation in this age of science:

' Then Christ sought out an artisan,  
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,  
And a motherless girl whose fingers thin  
Pushed from her faintly want and sin:  
These set He in the midst of them;  
And as they drew back their garment hem,  
For fear of defilement, "Lo, here," said He,  
"The images ye have made of Me."'

And the stunted artisan and the motherless girl have heard Christ's words addressed to us, and when the great painter painted his Christ as a Socialist leader, they have flocked in their thousands to gaze upon it.

If it is so then that we are on the verge of another great upheaval, a movement of wider reach and deeper significance than that before which Jerusalem fell, than that which threw down the great empire of Rome, than that which deluged Europe in blood at the beginning of the present century, What ought the follower of Christ to do? Two courses are open to him. Either he may stand aside and let the catastrophe come, or he may do all in his power to prevent it from coming, to prevent it from being a catastrophe or calamity at all.

What ought the follower of Christ to do? If in the face of such an alternative as has just been stated, the question may seem needless or even impertinent, let it be borne in mind that this is the first time in the history of Christianity that the alternative has ever been allowed. You say how needless to ask the Christian's duty when you offer him either to stand aside and see the utmost calamity come upon men, or to stay that calamity

even with the loss of his own dearly-loved life. But it is needful, for until now no Christian dreamt of doing otherwise than calmly stand aside; and even now there is a powerful, though unorganised body of Christians, of most unmistakable devotion, who hold firmly that that is the only attitude that is permitted them.

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Stand aside and see. It is the only permissible attitude, they say, for it is the Lord's explicit order. "Distress of nations and perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear—when these things come to pass, then lift ye up your heads, be strong and fear not, for your redemption draweth nigh."

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And for a moment the argument seems all to be on their side. For does not Jesus teach His disciples in this very prophecy, that "in the starvation, the bloodshed, and the horrors of that great national catastrophe, they were to behold the power and the glory of Christ, that in and through these He was executing judgment, and working out the great purpose of man's salvation; that when 'men's hearts were failing for fear,' then Christians were to look up, to lift up their heads, that is to say, in the midst of this direful tumult the Christian attitude was to be one of joyful expectation, because in these very events God's kingdom of redemption was drawing nigh to them"?

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And did He not further speak a parable unto them, the point of which went to show that the God of nature wrought always in the self-same way? "Behold the fig-tree and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand." Strange contrast! These awful and awe-inspiring events, these political and social cataclysms, are like the budding of the soft green leaves in spring. We look upon them as the emblem of the most gentle and peaceful life. Yet "every tender leaf that hangs upon a bough, fresh in its bright green colour, is a life which has emerged from struggle. Straining against the hard

outer case that confines it, the new life at last shatters its confining covering, and emerges into the light and liberty of the day." "So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

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The argument seems all to be with them, and the order of the Master as well. And yet there is not a Bishop in the "Anglican Communion meeting at Lambeth," there is no Westcott "sitting in the seat of St. Cuthbert," nor a Pope "looking out from his watch-tower in that city which once ruled the world," who wavers for a moment as to the alternative he ought to choose. Nor is it these watchmen only who make the better choice. Arnold Toynbee, whose heart was full of sympathy for the toiling masses, told a meeting of workmen, "We have neglected you. Instead of justice we have offered you hard and unreal advice. But I think we are changing. If you would only believe it and trust us, there are many of us who would spend our lives in your service." And all who surrounded him on that platform echoed the words he spoke. And even when the audience jeered, and interrupting the speaker, cried, "Nobody wants you to," and Arnold Toynbee was stung to the heart, and went home and died, there is not a Christian among us but knows he followed the Master as he did it.

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Yes, the order of the Lord and the argument seem all to be on the side of letting ill alone, of standing aside to see, of lifting up the head in comfort when the calamity comes. And here is a preacher and servant of the Lord who enters the pulpit of the University of Cambridge to-day, and the message he carries to the men of Cambridge University is that they dare not stand aside and see, that a great obligation lies upon them to spend themselves even to the laying down of the life if need be, as Arnold Toynbee did, that this calamity may never come. So once more, and in a marvellous way the spirit rejoiceth against the letter, and the Christian conscience is a swift witness for the Christian truth.