

## Recent Study of Isaiah.

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SEVERAL valuable contributions to the criticism and exegesis of Isaiah have lately been made in this JOURNAL. Professor Binney's argument from the colophon at Is. 38<sup>8</sup> in the Peshitta I must leave to others to appreciate ; to me it appears hazardous to assume that ch. 39, as well as 38<sup>9-20</sup>, was a later addition to the preceding narratives.

Dr. Cobb's careful study, "The Servant of Jahveh," gives a gratifying proof of that scholar's courage in 'repudiating' (his own word) an important part of his earlier critical work on Isaiah, and is further useful in calling renewed attention to Giesebrecht's view of ch. 53, already endorsed by Budde in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (1896, col. 288), and by Marti (*Theologie des A. T.*, by Kaiser and Marti, p. 152). That I am at present unable to follow them is no warrant that this will always be so. It is not so much the arguments of others as the inner working of one's own mind which alters conviction.

Professor Porter's "suggestion" respecting Isaiah's Immanuel has still more interested me. The difficulties in the way of accepting it seem to me, I confess, insuperable ; the ulterior critical consequences are such as I can hardly face, and such as the author himself does not appear to have completely faced. I think, too, that Professor Porter's subtle mind has not yet found room for my own arguments as given in pp. 32-36, and 39-40, of my *Introduction*. But I admit that in the fragmentary state of the text, and with the certainty that it has been interpolated, we cannot hope to place any explanation above the reach of objection. Professor Porter, too, has certainly done good service by emphasizing the distance between the two rival beliefs respecting Jahveh's help to Judah. It is only too likely that mothers who soon after Isaiah's prophecy gave their children joyous religious names (such as Immanuel, Hizkiah, etc.) lived to experience gloomy doubts as to the favorable disposition of Jahveh.

In one passage, Professor Porter virtually asks me to reconsider my view of Is. 8<sup>9b-10</sup>. At present I would rather maintain the undogmatizing attitude which I took up in my *Introduction*, but retain a certain preference for Giesebrecht's view, because I am not prepared to make a holocaust of passages in which Isaiah takes a bright view of the prospects of Judah. Professor Porter has read my book somewhat hastily if he thinks my preference for Giesebrecht's view "unaccountable." Were I to attempt a sketch of Isaiah's pictures of the future, I should at present take a different course from any of the German scholars who have undertaken this task. I should start from what I suppose to be the most probable critical facts, and explain Isaiah's apparent inconsistencies by the help of history and psychology. Perhaps I may add that I regard my analysis of ch. 28-31 as on the whole unassailable.

Dr. Cobb's interesting study, "The Ode in Is. 14," is more difficult for me to speak of. I have called it interesting, but I cannot add that it is, to me at least, altogether pleasant reading. It places me in an atmosphere in which I miss both "sweetness and light." I often marvel at the incaution, and hardly less at the tone of the writer. I should not care to answer some of Dr. Cobb's criticisms upon my *Introduction*; others, like that on my argument from the sense of רְשָׁעִים in Is. 14, simply arise out of a misapprehension.

I should like, however, to say something which may perhaps not be useless, even from Dr. Cobb's point of view, with reference (1) to his treatment of the metre of the great ode, (2) to a theory of Winckler, (3) to a theory of Gunkel, which he has adopted.

1. That Dr. Cobb has given his support to a metrical theory which is destined to play no small part in critical discussions, is most satisfactory. As he remarks, the wonder is, not that we find some difficulties, but that our difficulties in bringing out the metre are so few. His suggestions are really helpful, though the only one of great importance fails to satisfy me. The manifest distortion and corruption of part of vs.<sup>19</sup> merely makes it highly probable that there has been some mutilation of the text. To include vs.<sup>20</sup> in the fifth strophe argues, I think, a neglect of essential differences of style between vs.<sup>22</sup> and the preceding passage. Nor can I think that אָעִיר, without an introductory הִנֵּה, is plausible, especially as it is an unsupported form, even from Dr. Cobb's point of view. But I quite agree with him in his dissatisfaction with the superfluous קָרִים (or קָרִים?) in vs.<sup>21</sup>. Perhaps the most critical course would be to enclose the whole word-group וּמְלֹאוּ פְּנֵי־תֵבֶל עֲרִים within marks of inter-

rogation. For we can hardly even be sure that מלאך is correct; it is not a good parallel to ירשו (cf. *Addenda to Isaiah*, Hebrew text, in Haupt's *Old Testament*).

2. As to Winckler's theory, I meant no offence in calling it 'hasty.' It were easy to prove that this brilliant scholar is often hasty; indeed, the mode in which he delights to present his views to the world sufficiently proves his impatience. I find no fault with this; there are compensations for this unusual eagerness. But I must reassert what I have said (*Introd.*, p. 75) respecting the assignment of the ode to Isaiah. Had I supposed that this theory would attract much attention, I should of course have said more. The question as to who was the king referred to in the ode is, from a critic's point of view, a subordinate one. The main point is, Did Isaiah, or (for this is the only plausible view) some contemporary writer compose it? And my reply is that he did not. The evidence of language and ideas is altogether opposed to this. And if a contemporary Jewish writer had spoken of Sennacherib's death, and triumphed over the murdered king, he would certainly not have said that he had "destroyed his land, slain his people," nor that his dead body should be excluded from the tombs appointed for kings. (Dr. Cobb will see that I do not yield an inch to him. He would, I think, have done better, to identify the king referred to with Sargon, who might plausibly be said, owing to his later ill success, to have "destroyed his land, slain his people," and then to refer by way of illustration to Is. 14<sup>29</sup>).<sup>1</sup>

But the question still deserves to be considered whether the ode may not have been written in post-exilic times with reference to the murder of Sennacherib. That the Assyrian invasion (with which in Is. 37<sup>37-38</sup> the murder of the king is brought into close connection) long continued to stir the Jewish imagination, I need not pause to show. Sennacherib and Nebuchadrezzar became the two great typical oppressors of the Jews. Kuenen rightly points out in a context referred to by Dr. Cobb (*Einleitung*, ii. 86) that Isaiah could not have thrown himself into the emotional state of the author of the ode,

<sup>1</sup> In connection with this, he might have referred to Sir E. Strachey's *Jewish History and Politics*, ch. ix. To judge from this author's remark on p. 165 (where he dates 13<sup>2</sup>-14<sup>27</sup> "towards the end of the reign of Ahaz"), he suspected the king intended to be, not Sennacherib, but Sargon. At any rate, this ought to have been his view. The arguments which he offers for Isaiah's authorship are very different, mostly, from Dr. Cobb's. His great object is to show that the title "king of Babylon" in 14<sup>4a</sup> might have been applied by Isaiah to a king of Assyria. His bias is anti-critical.

assuming this poem to refer to the last king of Babylon, but he would certainly have admitted that a poetically gifted Jew in the sixth or fifth century B.C. might have imagined the feelings of an earlier generation. It would have been but a slight exaggeration for such a man to have said that Sennacherib had "destroyed his land, slain his people," for he knew nothing of the successes of that king subsequently to 701, and regarded the death of Sennacherib as the punishment of his treatment of Judah. The metrical resemblance of the ode in ch. 14 to the taunt-song in ch. 37 may be taken to furnish a slight corroboration of this view.

But it is still, I think, not impossible that the king intended is the last king of Babylon, and, as Dr. Cobb himself remarks, the original title of the ode in the collection from which it was taken, most probably connected it with a 'king of Babylon.' It is easier to explain the words of 14<sup>20, 21</sup> of the last king of a dynasty than of a king who had successors like Sennacherib; and Jer. 50, 51 cannot be adequately explained, except on the hypothesis that Babylon continued to be a name of horror to the Jews even in the Persian period. Surely, too, Dr. Cobb's keen epigram that the satire of 14<sup>16, 17</sup>, if meant of Nabuna'id, would have given the author an immortality of ridicule, is misplaced. It is well known that the later Jewish writers had little historical knowledge and still less historical spirit, and we cannot judge them by modern standards. We do not laugh at Shakespeare for his historical lapses; far less should we ridicule the late Jewish author of an ode of triumph on the last king of Babylon.

3. As to Dr. Cobb's use of Gunkel's theory,<sup>2</sup> I can be brief. Before Gunkel wrote, it had been proved that there was a great revival of mythological interest in the Babylonian and Persian period, owing to which the later writers contrast strongly with the sobriety and pale coloring of their predecessors. To Gunkel's work I have done full justice in the *Critical Review* and elsewhere, but I have not disguised its faults. It is impossible to point out a single distinct reference to Assyrio-Babylonian mythology in the pre-Exilic prophetic literature. The ode in Is. 14 is prophetic in spirit, but cannot, on the ground of its references to that mythology, be of pre-Exilic origin. At earliest, it may conceivably be contemporary with Ez. 26<sup>1-19</sup>, to which in contents it is so closely analogous, but there are solid reasons for placing it later. Dr. Cobb's arguments on pp. 28-30 of Vol. xv.

<sup>2</sup> How is it that Dr. Cobb makes no use of Gunkel's conjecture אבני ארני for אבני in 14<sup>19</sup>?

are, I believe, as unsound as his criticism on the linguistic evidence. But I heartily recognize in him an earnest fellow-seeker after truth, and I trust that many may be stirred up by his example to a deeper study of the prophetic literature.

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Since this article was written I note Hugo Winckler's recent attempt (*Altorientalische Forschungen* v. 414) to make Sargon rather than Sennacherib the subject of the ode. This only shows to my mind the futility of any pre-exilian reference.