The Known Isaiah

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Isaiah 40

Incredulity grows apace and with little shame. Take, as recent instances, the Cambridge “Divine Library,” the Oxford “Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament,” and Prof. Cheyne’s Bampton lectures on “The Origin and Religion of the Psalter:” works successively sinking lower and lower, as inspiration yields to the fancies of the fashionable criticism of the hour. That their authors, as well as some of their prototypes, deceive themselves, is true; but it is false to say that their premises and conclusions “do not touch either the authority or the inspiration of the scriptures of the Old Testament.” They subject the divine to the human in the written word; just as kindred unbelief works as to Christ’s person. As faith knows that He, though He became flesh, is none the less the True God and Eternal Life; so are we assured that every scripture is inspired of God and profitable for all spiritual uses: not only that men spoke from God, moved by the Holy Spirit, but that scripture, every scripture, is God-inspired. This is conclusive. The Holy Spirit has ruled dogmatically (as the Son of God did throughout His life and ministry, His death and resurrection) that scripture is God’s word and absolutely authoritative. Criticism is free, yea, bound, to clear away the errors of men that copied, of versions, etc. But it is rebellion against God, under plea of “literature” or scientific methods,” to question what inspired men wrote from God. “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” “Not in words taught by human wisdom,” says the apostle (1 Cor. 2),

“but in those taught by the Spirit.” Was He at all liable to mistake? or unable to secure the truth in result? God graciously employed men; but it is His word as truly as if His mouth alone had uttered it. This is not theory, but revealed truth.

The Christian stands on the vantage-ground of divine inspiration. This settles all questions. A book might be the genuine work of a given author; it might be authentic. But inspiration insures incomparably more, even God’s will and power and design executed by the instrument of His choice. For what more absurd and misleading than only helping so far as to leave disorder, inconsistency, or error, as His word? Nor is this all. His Son, the Lord Jesus, appeared long after the Old Testament was complete, and just before the New Testament began to be written. He, the Judge. of quick and dead, has decided for faith the questions men have been raising as to the Old Testament for the last century and more. They did essay the same speculation, founded on alleged internal evidence, as to the New Testament. This last seems dropped by our English followers of the German school. One of them declares, that the same canon of historical criticism, which authorizes the assumption of tradition in the Old Testament, forbids it in the case of the New Testament, except within the narrowest limits. But “the unique personality of Christ” is of all moment for the Old Testament. He spoke, as He lived and died and rose, for all time, yea, for eternity. His words on the Pentateuch, on the writings of Moses for instance, are wholly inconsistent with the so called critical view of its structure and growth. But men are so enamoured of their theory that, rather than abandon it, they are willing to betray His glory. He Who could say

“Before Abraham was, I am” knew well the men employed to write the scriptures, and shows Himself in the Gospels at issue with every erroneous opinion current around Him. Had it been His intention to say nothing on the points to be contested (and He knew the end from the beginning), it was easy for Him to have avoided saying, “He (Moses) wrote of Me,” “David himself said in the Holy Spirit,” “Daniel the prophet.” But rationalism is even less for Christ than superstition is; and both are enemies of the truth of God. Is the Holy Spirit too, the inspiring Spirit, to be subjected to profane limitations? That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, says He (in Matthew 8:17), citing Isaiah 53:4, from a central passage of that which stands at the head of this paper. Did the Spirit of God also accommodate Himself to popular error?

These chapters are “the most important and most familiar case in which modern critics have agreed to see the work of a plurality of authors in one book” (says the Cambridge Regius Prof. of Hebrew, D.L. 25): “one of the best examples of the methods and results of biblical criticism” (26). “Let us then forget... that this writing — or rather, whether it is the work of one writer or of several, this group of writings — is attached to the book of Isaiah. Let us simply interrogate the document itself, and collect the evidence which it offers concerning its author, and the time and place and circumstances of its writing. Direct statement there is none. Very rarely does the author let his own personality appear at all. But of indirect evidence, indicating the circumstances under which he wrote, there is no lack.” This would be reasonable enough if a merely human book were in debate; it is an absurd begging of the question in an

avowed prophecy. But we proceed now to weigh that which appears to him “entirely convincing.”

“Jerusalem is in ruins; the temple, in which past generations worshipped, is a heap of ashes; the cities of Judah are deserted, the land is desolate [citing Isa. 64:10, 11]. Israel is in exile, suffering the punishment of its sins. Jehovah has surrendered His people to their enemies. They are being tried in the furnace of affliction. Jerusalem has drunk to the dregs the cup of Jehovah’s fury. She lies prostrate in the dust. The chains of captivity are on the neck of the daughter of Zion. Zion is bereaved of her children, a barren exile, wandering to and fro. Her children are scattered from their home. Jehovah’s wife is divorced from Him for her children’s transgressions, and they are sold into slavery for their iniquities. Babylon is the scene of Israel’s captivity. Babylon is the tyrant who holds Zion’s children in thrall. Babylon has been Jehovah’s instrument for executing His judgments, and she has performed her task with cruel delight.

The exile has already lasted long. It seems to have become permanent. Jehovah sleeps. Zion fancies herself forgotten and forsaken. The weary decades of captivity are lengthening out into an eternity of punishment. But where faith and hope are strained to the point of breaking, deliverance is at hand. Jerusalem’s time of servitude is accomplished, satisfaction has been made for her iniquity. The decree is gone forth for freedom, redemption, restoration. The deliverer is on his way. Cyrus has been raised up from the east. He is already in full career of conquest. Babylon is doomed. Her gods are to be humbled. Jehovah is about to lead forth His people in a second exodus which will eclipse the glories of the

first, and to conduct them through the wilderness to their ancient home, Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and the temple restored.

“What I want you to observe is this — and pray do not take the statement on my authority, but verify it for yourselves — that the prophecy does not profess to predict the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and the mission of Cyrus. These things are described or assumed as existing facts. Jerusalem is destroyed, Israel is in exile. Cyrus is already triumphantly advancing from point to point. What is foretold is the speedy deliverance of the exiles from their captivity. All these data point unmistakably to the last ten years of the Babylonian exile as the time at which the prophecy was delivered. Moreover, there are indications, less definite perhaps, but tolerably convincing’ which point to Babylonia as the place in which the prophet was living. He speaks in the presence of a dominant heathenism. Idolatry in all its grossness and stupid folly surrounds him. He. has watched the infatuated idolaters manufacturing their gods, and carrying them in solemn procession, and setting them up in their temples. With unrivalled eloquence, inspired by mingled feelings of pity and indignation, he contrasts the power and wisdom of Jehovah, the living God, the God of Israel, with the impotence and ignorance of these lifeless idols. The whole drift of his description makes it plain that it is idolatry in its own heathen home of which he is speaking, not the idolatry of apostate Israelites in Judah. Moreover the prophet is in closest touch and sympathy with the exiles. He is fully acquainted with their circumstances, their character, their sins, their hopes, their fears, their faithlessness, their

despondency; and when we note how he unites himself with them in confession, in thanksgiving, in earnest pleading, we can scarcely doubt that he was himself one of them" (26-29).

Such is the rationalistic argument of Prof. Kirkpatrick, pleaded with greater detail by Dr. Driver in his "Introduction," 223-231. Rationalism "can scarcely doubt" its own dream. The truth of God it has lost, its reality, force, and blessing. Are not these University teachers aware that they have slipped into a similar position as an unquestionable sceptic like Mr. F. W. Newman, and on identical grounds? The difference is that he gives up the pretence of divine inspiration and rejects the claim of scripture to be God's word. They are clergymen specially because officially bound to vindicate what, in fact, they undermine.

But (apart from moral feeling and the denunciation they deprecate), what is the worth of the argument itself borrowed as it is from German neology, as this was in part from older English Deism? The earlier chapters do show that the prophet vividly realises, not only the exile in Babylon, but the deliverance of a Jewish remnant, not only the downfall of that city and its idols under Cyrus but his decree to build Jerusalem and to lay the foundation of the temple. Men assume that a prophet, was given to see nothing beyond the horizon of his own day, only what had a bearing on contemporary interests! But this is beyond controversy set aside by a vision (Isa. 6) which none of them denies to be Isaiah's — his most solemn call in the year that King Uzziah died. Happily too we have an inspired comment on its bearing which no Christian can question. "These things said Isaiah, because (or when) he saw his glory; and he spake of

him.” When the prophet saw the King, Jehovah of hosts, he saw the glory of the Son of God, of the Word in due time to be made flesh and to tabernacle here below, full of grace and truth. The prophet as the effect of the light owns himself to be of unclean lips and surroundings, but, touched from off the altar, is cleansed, and goes with the message of judicial blindness to the people that saw not His glory when present in divine love before their eyes. Nevertheless a remnant is pledged, even when His people should be, given up to utter insensibility and, as the consequence, desolation and removal from the land. Thus early was foreshown exile from Palestine, and reiterated consumption for those who should return, though not without the assurance of a holy seed. For promise cannot be broken any more than the scripture. But this early prediction in point of fact embraces not the Babylonian exile only, but troubles not yet exhausted, with a righteous remnant secured through all to inherit the promised blessing at the end.

The fact is that the maxim of the sceptics is unequivocally false. No prophecy of scripture is of its own (i.e., private or special) interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). It becomes part and parcel of God’s revealed mind, Who made it not to be of isolated solution but to bear on His kingdom in Christ, on which as a whole prophecy converges. And hence the confirmation of the vision on the Holy Mount, which was an anticipative sample of that kingdom. As the will of man did not bring in prophecy, so God, while employing the intelligence and affections of man, and his style, revealed His own mind, not only according to His ways which give variety of form, but according to His purpose which gives unity both to each book and to all scripture, not stopping

short of the grand display of His Kingdom triumphant over every foe at the close. To this all scripture bears witness from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, though in the prophets of course most fully and definitely. For what means the bruised Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head in Gen. 3:15? Did not that earliest of prophecies look out into a far distant horizon and bear consequences remote as well as near, and everlasting? "And to these also Enoch the seventh from Adam," says Jude, "prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with His holy myriads to execute judgment upon all." Like Isaiah, Enoch spoke of the Lord's judicial advent as an accomplished fact. So it is frequently in the prophets. How applicable is our Lord's reply, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God!

This is remarkably attested in 1 Peter 1:10-12 too. For we learn that the Old Testament prophets sought out and searched out concerning the salvation now given in Christ, searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ that was. in them pointed to. So truly was it God Who wrought in His own certainty above all the ignorance of the instruments He was using. Nay more, it was revealed to them, that not to themselves, but to souls who centuries after believed, they ministered the things now announced in the gospel. Can any sentence be more subversive of the fundamental axiom common to all shades of unbelieving criticism? Yet the context (1 Peter 1:13) goes still farther, and proves that only at the revelation of Jesus Christ Will be fully achieved that deliverance from the ruin of sin which God announced from of old. So far did prophecy stretch beyond the horizon of the prophet's day and rise above contemporary interests.

So, in the closing chapters of Isaiah, is it not superficial in the extreme to say that “they deal throughout with a common theme, viz., Israel’s restoration from exile in Babylon”? On their face it is undeniable that from Isaiah 49 the far deeper question is broached of the Messiah labouring in vain and spending His strength for nought and vanity, the true Israel in whom Jehovah is glorified, Though man despised and the nation abhorred Him, He should be a light to the Gentiles and salvation unto the end of the earth, before the day on which kings will be Zion’s nursing fathers and queens her nursing mothers, and Jehovah shall judge the. oppressors of Israel and deliver themselves as the Mighty One of Jacob. Still more plainly is the stricken Messiah set before us in Isa. 50, Creator yet a man, the obedient man. Most clearly and in the richest detail is He presented by the prophet in Isaiah 52, 53, as the propitiation for sins, on Whom Jehovah laid the iniquity of us all; not only so, but exalted, and lifted up, and very high, when the pleasure of Jehovah prospers in His hand. For then Jehovah is to divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, This points to a time of judgment and glory not yet fulfilled, but just as sure as that grace which we now know in Him to our everlasting peace and joy, unless we be mere and guilty unbelievers.

But it also refutes simply and absolutely for the Christian the self-confident argument of the “higher criticism.” For the vision of the Messiah is no less openly set forth by the prophet, than the preceding view of the Babylonish exile and the deliverer raised up from the north and the east. They do not deny this prediction of the Messiah, His sufferings and the glories that should follow them. If they did, what must be thought of them

in direct contradiction of the gospel, the apostles, and the Lord Himself? They might equally argue that the prophecy does not profess to predict the mission of Christ, His humiliation, His atoning work, and His exaltation. “These things are described or assumed as existing facts,” no less than the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and the mission of Cyrus. The Spirit of prophecy in living power habitually carried him who wrote, and notably Isaiah, into the time, place, and circumstances of the prediction.

This the sceptical school, most of whom deny all real prediction no less than miracle, pervert into evidence of the prophet’s residence among the exiles in Babylon a few years before the return! Some few like our English professors do not go so far as the rest in blank and audacious infidelity. Dr. Driver and Mr. Kirkpatrick, admitting prediction in a small degree only, will not hear that Isaiah wrote the later chapters, any more than Isa. 13, 14, and others in the earlier part. of the book. They adopt therefore the hypothesis of all unknown and unnamed prophet, more wonderful even than Isaiah! when Cyrus was conspicuous and the exile drawing to an end. But the truth is that their reasoning would make the prophet to have lived in our Lord’s day! to have sustained the contempt of the Jewish people and especially their religious chiefs, to have sorrowed and sympathised with the godly that believe! nay to have seen His triumph in a way not yet fulfilled, and wholly distinct from the honour and glory with which He now sits crowned on High!

It may be added that the latter section of this continuous prophecy presents, no longer Israel the privileged and responsible servant of Jehovah, guilty of idolatry and

exiled in Babylon, the great source and patron of idols, but delivered for Jehovah's name-sake; nor the Righteous Servant suffering, especially in atonement, and making intercession, seeing of the travail of His soul and exalted. The final chapters show the Messiah proclaiming not only in His grace the acceptable year of Jehovah but the day of vengeance of our God, the executor of divine judgment on the quick. Yet even in that day the works marvels in the heart and conscience of Israel, when they too are by grace acknowledged fully as Jehovah's servants, while their proud unbelieving brethren perish for ever. For God is not mocked, and no flesh shall glory in His presence. Hence, as in this part we bear of the new heavens and a new earth, of the glorious state of Jerusalem, Israel, and their land, we see also that Jehovah will plead by fire with all flesh and pour indignation on His enemies, in a time assuredly not yet come. The axiom of neo-criticism is therefore demonstrably false; and the more the chapters are duly, examined, the more evidently is the hypothesis cloud and not light.

Leaving general remarks, let us come a little closer. There is no analogy whatever between historical books, like those of Samuel, Kings, etc., and the later prophets, as they are called. Nor does more than one account of the same event prove compilation, or lack of harmony; it is due to difference of divine design. See this conspicuously in the Acts of the Apostles, where we have the call of Paul three several times: once as the historical fact (Acts 9), another time in the apostle's speech to the Jews (Acts 22), and lastly when before king Agrippa and the Roman governor (Acts 26). It is all well among men to talk of discrepancy making for the

good faith of a compiler; but such a thought is wholly out of place and irreverent when applied to scripture. For “every scripture is inspired of God,” and one is, therefore, equally true as another, but each adapted to a special purpose of God. Contradictions are apparent only to ignorance. Whatever may be the various methods of historiography in the East or in the West, ancient or modern, we are never right if we forget that, in the Bible, we have to do with God Who cannot lie, whatever be the errata from copyists or the like, here or there; to correct or eliminate, which is the legitimate province of true criticism.

That the prophets from whom we have words of the Lord to any considerable extent, delivered discourses from time to time, and afterwards collected them into the books which bear their names, is not to be doubted; and assuredly it applies no less to Hosea and Isaiah, than to Joel and Ezekiel. When the simple order of chronology suffices, this is of course adhered to; but a deeper order is found in O.T. scriptures, as well as notably in the Gospel of Luke. Inspiration decided this: wherever it was called for, it exists; and to fail in heeding it must be a positive and fatal hindrance to just interpretation. Everywhere in the Bible divine design will be found to rule: divine we say, for it may not have been apprehended fully or at all by the writers.

Again, that an amanuensis sometimes worked instead of the inspired writer, is true in both Testaments. That when a scribe wrote, as Baruch after Jehoiakim burnt the first roll, adding many like words according to the prophet’s dictation, is as simple as it is certain. But what has this to do, extraordinary as it was, with other cases having not the least analogy? “Twenty years,” a century,

a millennium, can make no difference to the inspiring power of God, Who works by means, or without them, according to His sovereign pleasure and wisdom.

Thus in the New Testament we see that the apostle John wholly omits the agony in the garden, though one of the favoured three so close at hand; while Matthew, Mark, and Luke, give it more or less fully, not one of whom was in any measure a witness. Similarly John alone of the evangelists heard the great prophecy on Mount Olivet, whilst he alone gives not a word of it. And why? In no case because of a first-hand knowledge or a more thorough investigation, but because of the governing purpose of God in each Gospel, which excluded in John whatever was requisite in the synoptics, both in a varying form exactly suited to each, and in all with a wisdom of which God alone was capable. Such is inspiration: the greatest contrast possible with the rationalistic effort to conceive the origin and arrangement of the books of scripture, an effort characterized by the deadly bane of attributing to man what flows truly from God. Hence they lose His mind in the interpretation, because man, not God, is in all their thoughts.

But coming to Isaiah, we may learn much from the early chapters, indeed from the very first. The prophet’s eye was given to see the things that were not actually, as though they were, a far-reaching vision into evil issues which no one else could discern, and above all into the bright day, with sure anticipation of divine blessing and glory. No doubt every discourse was given in circumstances which called for it; for God was addressing man there and then. But to limit a prophecy to its local or temporal occasion is unbelieving and

unmitigated error; for God ever has in view, and in prophecy has revealed, His own glory inseparable from Christ. It is therefore, in order to meet both, a marked feature in prophecy to give the name of the prophet, and, in all but very short prophecies, to let us know not a little of his local surroundings and the time when he lived and uttered the words of Jehovah. This is distinct in the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and in very many even of the minor prophets. Its importance is obvious,. and the hand of the enemy ought to be as evident in those modern critics whose labour is directed, by every ingenious device, to raise difficulties and infuse doubts where the written word is plain and sure.

In Isa. 1, after the prophet names himself and his object and times, he sets forth before heaven and earth the ungrateful folly and rebellious sin of Israel, and the uselessness of such chastening and humiliation as had been their portion hitherto. What availed their sacrifices, their temple service, their new moons and sabbaths, which their moral corruption and hard-heartedness made only an offence to Jehovah? As yet, however, they are urged and encouraged to repent, assured of His grace if they hearken, but, if not, of consumption by the sword. Then follows a touching Plaint over their ruin; for the Prophet was given to know that the people would refuse Jehovah’s call. The appeal closes with the LORD of hosts executing judgment and purification, when He will restore their judges as at first, and their counsellors as in the beginning, and Jerusalem will be in truth a city of righteousness, a faithful state. Zion, it is emphatically declared, shall be redeemed with judgment.

How different from the gospel dealing individually now by grace, and hence of faith! Zion's day of blessing opens with judgment, however great and real the action of divine mercy and truth and righteousness. It is the day of Messiah's power when His people shall be willing and He rules in the midst of His enemies. What blindness to overlook, even in this preface, that, as God foreknew, so He here reveals the end from the beginning! Yet it was an actual appeal to Judah in that day, though being divine for every succeeding day of Israel's sin and ruin. To reduce its character, to say only that it "was providentially designed to meet the needs of that time," is to make it of private interpretation. While thoroughly addressed to the people's conscience and doubtless blessed to such as had ears to hear, the Spirit of prophecy stretches over all times to the day of Christ's glory in Israel, by judgment as well as mercy, restored according to God.

The prophetic strain in Isa. 2-4 is no less instructive in another form. For here the prophet opens as he closes with unmistakable pictures of Messiah's reign in power over the earth. It is the more striking if he was led to cite Micah 4:1-3 as the introduction; and seemingly the "And" of our ver. 2 suits a quotation only, whereas in the contemporary prophecy it is required. But in any case the day of earth's blessedness is in full sight for "all nations" flowing to the religious centre, the mountain of Jehovah's house; as Isa. 4 shows the Branch of Jehovah, Christ beautiful and glorious, the remnant holy, Jerusalem purged from its blood by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, and over all the glory as a canopy, like the cloud over the tabernacle in the wilderness. More definite charges of evil both in

religion and in state come in Isa. 3. But the same principle applies as in Isa. 1. Blessing would follow repentance; only the prophet lets us know that, in any full measure, it awaits the day of Jehovah, and as a fact its opening divine judgments. When they are in the earth, even the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. But where is the maxim of neo-criticism in presence of the prophecy, even at the threshold? Isa. 5 opens a new prophetic deliverance. It is evidently incomplete if taken alone; for under "a song of my beloved touching his vineyard" the faithlessness of the house of Israel is solemnly set out, notwithstanding all Jehovah's gracious care. It was so flagrant, that He could appeal to the proudest of themselves to judge in their own conscience. Judgment must ensue. Accordingly, after six successive woes from 8-24, Jehovah's hand is declared to be stretched forth unto them, so that the hills tremble and their carcasses are as refuse in the midst of the streets; and that solemn refrain of ominous chastisement begins, (ver. 25) "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." And a still heavier blow is announced (to the end of the chapter) from distant nations rushing swiftly and roaring against them, with nothing but darkness — distress — for the land, and the light darkened with its clouds. It is no less evident that Isa. 6, already noticed, briefly interrupts the strain; and also Isa. 7-9:7: so that only in Isa. 9:8 do we find the resumption of the dirge begun in Isa. 5 when four times is repeated the knell of coming judgment (v. 12, v. 17, v. 21, Isa. 10:4).

But a change comes for their haughtiest foe from ver. 5, when circumstances look darkest, and the answer to

their cry of distress at length is heard in ver. 25 (see Isa. 10:12): “For yet a little while, and the indignation shall be accomplished, and mine anger in their destruction.” The Assyrian of the past is but a type of their mighty antagonist at the close, when Israel once more shall enter relations with Jehovah, and livingly and for ever. The time hastens, but is in no sense come yet; for it is immediately followed by the Messiah’s manifest reign of righteousness and peace, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. Thus Isa. 11, 12 are the true and bright termination of what commences so sadly in Isa. 5.

But what of the intercalated three chapters and more? No mere man would have thought of it: no arrangement more at issue with literary taste or scientific skill. Chronology wholly gives way to the higher need of a design. worthy of God, and hardly conceivable save in the “second cares” of the great prophet, when not first giving out each portion, but combining them finally a., his collective book according to a wisdom above his own. For Isa. 6 shows Jehovah’s glory rejected in Christ: a far more serious sin and of deeper consequence than their national failures and the national chastisements down to the end. In the midst of that external history came Jehovah, as in Isa. 6, and incarnate, as in Isa. 7. But they and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor the voices of the prophets which were read every sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning Him. The interposed portion pursues the episode of the intervening Immanuel with the assurance of total ruin for all adversaries, however girt and whatever their counsel. Meanwhile He was to be for a sanctuary to a believing remnant, but for a stone of stumbling and for a

rock of offence to both the houses of Israel; and for this application we have the unerring word of the Holy Spirit in the N.T. What a key to the religious history of the Jews whose awful apostacy is sketched to the end of Isa. 8! In contrast with that darkness the great light would shine in Galilee of the nations, as in fact it did. Then suddenly, as so often in the prophets, we are transported from the grace of the first advent to the glory and judgment that will characterize the second; and the kingdom of the divine Messiah follows in connection with Israel, just as we see in Isa. 11-12.

Here then we have a two-fold witness in this remarkable but divinely complete prophecy of Isaiah. Is it true that it was "so near to the events which it foretells?" Or is this a dream of pseudocriticism?

The second division of the book may now be compared with the assumptions of modern criticism. Its inherent unsoundness and fatal issues only the more appear, as is ever the case where the starting-point is false. We have seen that every one of the subsections of the first refutes the premise. For the historic occasion, however fit, may and does go far beyond it, and is limited to no proximate application. Instead of this, it stops not short of the grand display, not yet arrived, of the divine glory in the kingdom of the rejected Messiah. Pre-exilic, exilic, or post-exilic, whatever their shades of difference, are uniform in converging on this purpose of God. Isa. 1, Isa. 2-4, Isa. 5 — (Isa. 6, Isa. 7 — Isa. 9:7) — Isa. 9 — Isa. 12, are not only inspired witnesses against this πρῶτον ψεῦδος, but divine disproof of it, and most conclusive. For, as the rule, prophecy of scripture is constructed by the Holy Spirit to be of no such private interpretation, or self-solution. By all His prophets since time began God

spoke more or less clearly of seasons of refreshing from His presence when He will send Christ, the fore-ordained for Israel, to bring in times of restoring of all things. This is the revealed truth of the N.T., which theology denies openly and everywhere, even in the less advanced disciples of Oxford and Cambridge. For these, like their more daringly sceptical German guides, are not ashamed to avow and defend the paradox that the truly prophetic character of the work gains by denying that Isaiah wrote e.g., of Babylon's fall more than a century and a half before, and by referring such predictions to some unknown prophet a few years before the exile expired! Look at the prophets of the exilic period, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel: each having a divine lot suited to the instrument, all adapted to the varied circumstances, but none in the least like the challenged chapters of Isaiah. Modern criticism dreams of an imaginary, or at least (and contrary to all analogy) an unnamed prophet at a crisis for which grace provided amply by known prophets, and seeks to rob alike Isaiah of his brightest jewels and believers of their settled certainty. The incredulity of this school tends to shake the credit of scripture from the least thing to the greatest! And this is yet more evident when we glance at Isa. 24-27; for the last four seem the due close of this second series.

On the very threshold before the ark of Jehovah the rationalistic idol is fallen, with its head and hands cut off. Of these oracles or "burdens," characteristically though not exclusively on the nations (as Isa. 1-12 centred in Judah or Israel), the first contradicts flatly the neological axiom, that the situation presupposed must be that of Isaiah's age. But the prophecy itself explicitly

declares the contrary. And every scripture is inspired of God. There is no real question as to the text on external evidence1, any more than on internal, save for men credulous enough to believe their own capricious canon, imposed by infidelity and opposed to all possible proof. These modern critics are avowedly on the human ground of degrees of probability; faith never is, but on that of absolute subjection to scripture as the voice of God. It is false, as they argue, that it is a question between traditional views and internal evidence. Here they cannot deny that the text, to be believed and interpreted, declares unambiguously against their primary assumption. Yet so pre-occupied and blinded are they by their own tradition about a century old, that they dare to fly in the face of the original text as well attested here as in any other part of the book which they own to be inspired. Alas! it is with the written as with the personal Word, “how can ye believe which receive glory one of another, and the glory that is from the only God ye seek not?” The authority of the ancient prophets, of the N.T. apostles of our Lord, and of the inspiring Holy Ghost, has less weight in their eyes than the conflicting hypotheses of Koppe, Doederlein, Eichhorn, Justi, and Gesenius, of Hitzig, Knobel, Umbreit, Ewald, Kuenen, Wellhausen, and Riehm. These, with their English followers, when their scheme requires it, join hand and hand for their own thoughts in throwing overboard the word of God in the face of all true and irrefragable testimony Infidelity is a withering and destructive evil. Let them beware lest it advance to greater impiety.

A similar principle applies to the rationalistic treatment of Isa. 21:1-10. It follows a chapter unquestionably Isaiah’s, as it precedes a burden of kindred character

(Isa. 22) which nobody as far as I know disputes to be his. But if his, and most distinctly predicting new and special features of Babylon's fall, it uproots their foundation. as to prophecy, and duly in its place follows up the trumpet blast of Isa. 13, and 14.

On other grounds many of these freethinkers attribute Isa. 15, 16, to some earlier prophet! adopted and reinforced by Isaiah. Does such speculation deserve other answer than that men, without the fear of God, may think and say any thing? If they trembled at the word of Jehovah, we should be spared such empty words. Again, Isa. 24-27, are attributed to a prophet distinct from him whom they style the Deutero-Isaiah, as well as from the original source of Isa. 15, 16. There is no cheek on these vagaries when these adventurous mariners abandon alike the captain and the chart, compass, and anchor of God's word in any just sense of these terms.

Enough has been said to vindicate the prophet generally. We may now interrogate the internal evidence so recklessly misdirected by the rationalists. To the believer (and an unbeliever is out of court as an interpreter of scripture) Isa. 13, 14, are reverently accepted as Isaiah's according to the opening words; against which on the legitimate canons of textual criticism no valid objection has ever been laid by Jew or Christian, by heterodox or infidel. Not only so, if intelligent, he sees divine wisdom in the order which departed from mere chronology for the higher and graver reason of setting in the van the last and victorious enemy of Judah which was, though far later than the other adversaries, to attain an altogether new relation of imperial power as Daniel would show in his

season. The comparatively distant outlook of the oracle gave way to that design. The disputer of this age seats himself on a vain bench of judgment, and, yielding to human thoughts, necessarily misses the mind of God; he lacks the obedience of faith and does without the guidance of His Spirit in subjection to His word. “The burden concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see” is undoubtedly future throughout and has no trace of allusion to the circumstances of the prophet’s age, place it even as the rationalists would. The Jews are not represented as in exile; which is only prophetically involved in the prediction (Isa. 14:1-3) of Jehovah’s choosing, not Judah only, still less a remnant, but Israel, and setting them in their own land: their hope still unaccomplished but sure, when they shall rule over their oppressors; not “servants” or bondmen “this day,” as the remnant owned solemnly in Neh. 9:36, as before in Ezra 9:9 (R.V. “are,” not “were” as in A.V.) long after the return from Babylon. The moral ground, as we learn from elsewhere, did exist. It began in the wilderness, as Amos long before told Ephraim in predicting their exile beyond Damascus; and this was no less true of Judah. But that of revolted Ephraim was precipitated by the unrepented sin of Jeroboam, with yet more flagrant results, till the Assyrian swept them away; as the fidelity of several kings of David’s house was a stay for Judah, till the idolatry, rebellion, and perjury of king, priests, and people provoked Jehovah’s wrath, and “there was no remedy,” and those that escaped the sword were carried to Babylon.

The burden contemplates the scene as a whole, not in the least events in progress or such as a spiritual mind might discern. It is in the strictest and fullest way

predictive. There is no spirit unworthy of Isaiah, though that of the Christian was not and could not be till Christ came and the Spirit of adoption was given. The style is as noble and the imagery as bold and beautiful as in any other effusion of the very chiefest of the prophets. It was not “alien to the genius of prophecy” even in Lev. 26, besides other horrors for the land and their cities, to warn of scattering the chosen people among the nations and the land enjoying her sabbaths, to say nothing now of Dent. 28, on which holy and genuine book of Moses the scepticism of professing Christians has laid its profane hand. In this burden God gave Isaiah not only to prophesy of Chaldean Babylon, the first of the great world-powers, as the object of hatred, overthrow, and slaughter to the ruthless Mede, the executor of divine judgment, but to see in inspired perspective the last holder of the world-powers that should successively follow Babylon, with which Israel’s deliverance synchronises. And on the face of the strain, how is it that these men, so wise and prudent, fail to see that between the fall of imperial Babylon, and the ruin of the future chief of the last empire, comes a most momentous prediction, long after the one and still longer before the other, of the perishing of that great city’s very ruins?

Yet what was more improbable humanly, even if any were so credulous as to accept the figment of an unknown seer living toward the close of the exile? “It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the

wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged" (Isa. 13:20-22).

The book of Daniel (Dan. 6) proves how little Cyrus thought of destroying fallen Babylon. Even Darius Hystaspes, after its revolt and recapture broke down only its outer walls. Xerxes, to punish the Babylonians for their resentment at his plunder of the temple of Belus, was satisfied with destroying that great building. Alexander the Great even encouraged them to rebuild what Xerxes had levelled; and his project to make Babylon the metropolis of his universal empire only fell through by his premature death. Afterwards it declined under his successors, not only through their wars but the building of Seleucia, as before by the Persians Ctesiphon, not far off, expressly to drain away its still vast population; and hence Strabo in the days of Tiberius spoke of it as to a great degree deserted. So Pausanias toward the close of the first century (Arcad.) said of this Babylon, once the greatest city of all that the sun beheld, that nothing now remains but her walls. The turning its site into a park for hunting wild beasts had contributed to its rapid devastation; and the fresh bed of the Euphrates, when it was stopped and caused an enormous marsh, yet more. Still the apostle Peter directed his first epistle, if not his second, from Babylon, to the christian Jaws of Asia Minor. And Theodoret in the fifth century of our era speaks of some Jews living there; which is fully confirmed by the issue of the Babylonian Talmud thence at the end of that century or beginning of the next. Yet it is folly to deny the total ruin of the once "golden city" because of a village here and there on the

skirts of that awful desolation so graphically portrayed by the prophet. It was not so with the other imperial cities; it will be so with Rome, for the Holy Spirit has so written. Only He could have given Isaiah or John to predict either.

It is pleasant to note one observation of value, which Dr. Driver states; as we too have for many years insisted in these pages, as to which many students of the prophetic word are at fault. “The prophecy (Isa. 14:24-27) has no connection with what precedes. It is directed against Assyria, not Babylon” (p. 202). He does not see, though it is most important, that it is expressly placed here subsequently to mark that, when the complete fulfilment takes place, and the day of Jehovah arrives not in part but fully at the end of the age, the last Assyrian will fall after the destruction of him who finally represents “the beast” or system of power which began with Babylon. Historically it had been the inverse, for Assyria fell long before Babylon. But by and by the beast will be destroyed from above; then will Jehovah tread the Assyrian under foot on his mountains, which was not literally so of old. Compare Micah 5. But though distinct they are connected (for there is no fresh “burden” here), but only connected so as to bring out their true order in the tremendous scenes of the latter day. The Assyrian is neither Antichrist nor the beast, but the chief of the north-eastern hordes of that day, of whom the prophets have much to say.

But we have not done with the connection. It is not to close as that of the Assyrian to fall after Babylon. “In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden,” which the Revisers rightly connect with Philistia or Palestina, rather than with the Assyrian, as did the A.V., or those

who arranged the paragraphs. Whatever may have been the historical earnest in the past (and commentators, as usual, differ widely, some understanding Jewish rulers, others successive kings of Assyria and the slain Sargon followed by Sennacherib), the true aim is to place the complete destruction of the old internal enemy of Israel by Christ in line with the final judgment of Babylon and Assyria, so as to bring out Jehovah's founding Zion in that glorious day, where the afflicted of His people take refuge — Zion, the divine contrast with Babylon, Philistia, or any other Gentile boast. Compare Ps. 87, with Ps. 2, Ps. 14:7, Ps. 20, Ps. 48, Ps. Ps. 65, Ps. 76, Ps. 78, Ps. 84, Ps. 132, Ps. 146, Ps. 147, Ps. 149.

The pride of Moab is finally put down in Isa. 15, 16, whereas the throne of David is set up. See Amos 9. So in Isa. 17 Damascus is to be a ruinous heap, when Ephraim too that looked for her help ceases to have power, and the mighty rush of nations interfering to their destruction is rebuked in the latter day.

In Isa. 18 we see a land, outside the limits of the distant peoples on the Nile and the Euphrates, playing the part of protector to the Jew, a maritime power seeking to restore the chosen people to their land; but when all seems to promise good fruit, the project comes to nothing through the old jealousy and hatred of Israel; and then Jehovah of hosts undertakes and accomplishes the work Himself. For up to this point of these varied "burdens," or that which is connected with them, they all end in deliverance for Israel. Can any thing be more absurd than the rationalistic idea of Ethiopia here? Cush was Asiatic as well as African, and its rivers the seat of powers well-known and formidable to Israel. The land favourable to Israel but failing is beyond either, and left

intentionally with no express explanation. The people scattered, etc., and in that time, when all appears lost once more, brought to Jehovah and the place of His name, the mount Zion, are His ancient people. But one must not expect intelligence of His purpose in the word from those whose principle dishonours it.

The group of “burdens” (Isa. 19-23), with the immensely enlarging revelation (Isa. 24-27) which closes them in mercy to Israel (through judgment executed on earth, the heavenly places, and the dark powers of evil), has its own characteristic differences, though all without doubt from the prophet Isaiah. They are occupied with the troubles of the nations beginning with Egypt and Ethiopia; but they include in a singular way Babylon and Jerusalem itself, which evidently are styled in an enigmatic manner and in reference one to the other (Isa. 21, 22). The solution seems to be that, though the fall of Babylon by the Medo-Persian armies is rehearsed with striking force, it implies that Jerusalem “the valley of vision” will be laid waste by the warriors of Elam and Kir when Babylon could be described as “the desert of the sea”: a fulfilment still to come for Jerusalem,2 though Babylon has long been so. Compare Zech. 14:2. The Assyrian is the great leader, whether historically or prophetically. The wisdom of nature failed Egypt and her allies; the independence of Dumah will not avail; nor shall Arab and Kedar escape the overflowing scourge. As Babylon fell and sunk into a desert with scarce a parallel, so Jerusalem suffers for its shameless forgetfulness of God and of its unique relation to Him; and so does the crowning Tyre with its merchant princes, for Jehovah of hosts would stain the pride of all glory.

Then follows a desolation which, beginning with the land and people of God, extends to the world at large. Yet from the uttermost part of the earth songs are heard; for not only are the wicked and treacherous smitten, and the earth itself, but Jehovah will punish the hosts of the height on high, and the kings of earth on the earth: as our Lord said, “the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,” and not the earth only and its rulers. And Jehovah reigns in mount Zion. The prophet accordingly breaks forth into thanksgiving (Isa. 25), and furnishes the song for that day in Judah (Isa. 26), with a final hymn, (Isa. 27), when at length Jehovah punishes leviathan the fleeing serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent, and the monster that is in the sea: the old enemy viewed emblematically as acting by political powers against God’s glory in Israel.

As to not only Isa. 21 but these last four chapters rationalism vents its trite and baseless objections. If Isaiah’s, as there is no solid reason to doubt, its occupation is gone. The N.T. proves (in 1 Cor. 15), that the last continuous prophecy is future. For in that day the covering overall peoples will be destroyed, the first resurrection will be realized, the indignation of God against Israel overpast, Satan’s bad eminence extinguished, and the outcasts once more and for ever worshipping in the holy mountain at Jerusalem. If we believe the word of God, the neological hypothesis perishes in its own corruption. So far is it from being true that there is no definite prophecy in scripture save in the near future of the prophet, we may with certain evidence reverse the maxim. The person of Christ gathers round itself a vast series of minute, clear, and often exclusively verified predictions ranging through

the scriptures of more than a thousand years. And very many more are only eluded by the unbelief which clouds those who await their fulfilment when He comes again.

Isaiah 28

How does rationalism fare when the next or third division of the prophecy is seriously examined? We have a series of chapters, about not Jerusalem only but all Israel on earth (28-35), that have the common character of dealing with the final judgments which usher in more and more brightly the everlasting deliverance and blessing. Hence any past historic circumstances appear but little, so as soon to bring into relief the grand ways of God with and for the Jews at the end of the age.

In this group of “Woes” the Holy Spirit with the utmost moral propriety begins, not with the Assyrian, but with Ephraim or Samaria in Isa. 28, and with Jerusalem, or Ariel the lion of God, in Isa. 29. The Lord cannot overlook but must judge the evil of His own people, if He is about to put down their enemies unsparingly. The crown of pride shall be trodden down under a destroying tempest; and so it was. But even the remnant erred, priest and prophet; and self-indulgence indisposes to the word of Jehovah, let Him meet His people as He may. Whereon the prophet turns to the scornful rulers in Jerusalem who boasted of their prudent policy to escape the overflowing scourge. “We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol have we made agreement” (Isa. 28:15). But Messiah is the sole and sure foundation-stone which the Lord Jehovah lays in Zion, As he that trusteth shall not make haste, lies and falsehood will but ensure judgment, and the overflowing scourge tread those down who sought shelter in the

power of darkness. How can any Christian doubt that the prophecy on the side of both good and evil looks far beyond whatever partial application it had in Isaiah's day? Nor does the N.T. (Rom. 9, 10, 1 Peter 2) intimate that all was fulfilled, because the only Man was come Who could be without impiety an object of trust. It cites what was accomplished, but leaves for a day still future Jehovah's rising up for His strange work and His unwonted task, a consumption that is determined for the whole land or earth. Even men are taught a variety of dealings for a desired end: how much more God teaches! If men were not pre-occupied, they must have perceived that this chapter implies a successful attack on Jerusalem, as well as the downfall of Samaria. What has hindered is the fatal mistake of looking only at the past, or the yet more daring unbelief of imputing an exaggeration and error to the prophet when he predicted far more. Isaiah distinctly tells the scornful rulers of Jerusalem that the Assyrian scourge should tread them down; and the believer is sure that, as this never was the fact in the past, it must be in the future. "Scripture cannot be broken."

But the interest increases when we understand Isa. 29, which unveils a subsequent picture, a second attack on Jerusalem; and when they are reduced to the lowest, instead of being trodden down, "The multitude of thine enemies shall be like fine dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones as chaff that passeth away; and it shall be in an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited by Jehovah of hosts with thunder and with earthquake and great noise, with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of devouring fire" (ver. 4-6). Now this goes far beyond even the blow which an angel of Jehovah dealt on the

Assyrian camp of old. For two considerations distinguish the future from the past. First, scripture does not speak of more than 185,000 warriors then left dead; here it menaces with sudden destruction the multitude of all the nations that fight against mount Zion. Next, it declares that in that day the deaf shall hear and the blind see, and the meek increase their joy in Jehovah, and Jacob shall not now be ashamed; it is what these critics call the “ideal future.” When it comes, it will be a deep and plain reality. For “so all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11). Never yet has “the altered character and temper “manifested itself in the nation, because the time is not come, though it be as sure as the prophecy is inspired.

Isa. 30 is no less unmanageable on the neocritical hypothesis, with “the ideal future,” its necessary, though vague, misleading, and irreverent resource. For, if real and certain, however distant, the hypothesis falls. Read it in faith, not as a sceptic, and its entire fulfilment in the consummation of the age is in accord with the general bearing of prophecy; as “the glorification of external nature” corresponds to the new age no less than a transformed” Israel, henceforth blessed and a blessing in Jehovah Messiah. The punishment of the Assyrian (11 for the king also,” ver. 33) wholly differs from that which befell Sennacherib or his mighty men, and it awaits a corresponding foe of Israel in that day. Compare Dan. 8:23-25, Dan. 11:44, 45, Joel 3:9-17, Micah 5:5-9, Zeph. 3:8-15, Zech. 12:9, Zech. 14:1-4. “The King” is Antichrist.

Isa. 31, 32, confirm the believing conclusion manifestly; for Jehovah’s instruction in that day (4, 5) exceeds all yet experienced, as also does Israel’s renewal (6, 7). Of

course Isa. 32:1-8 is once more characterised as “the ideal future;” not a word about Christ and His reign, swamped under a phrase which may mean all or nothing. The truth is that this scripture, after the fall of the Assyrian, reveals the consolation of Israel in Messiah’s reign, and the latter rain, or the outpouring of the Spirit, when the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted a forest. How can a rationalist face such revelations, and retain his unhallowed brief that the prophet never abandons his own historical position, but speaks from it? How God is left out is plain enough in another’s words: “We will not say that prediction is impossible, or necessarily limited to vague generalities”! Could such language come from such as tremble at Jehovah’s word? Their à priori principle is false and unbelieving; their arguments are not founded on a holy interrogation of the document, but on misuse of the historical starting-point, to ignore or contradict the evidence it affords that the Spirit of prophecy embraces the judgment of the quick, in part or as a whole, in order to the establishment of Messiah’s kingdom on earth.

Quite in its true prophetic place, whatever the date of separate delivery, stands Isa. 33 which appears to be the invasion of Gog (cf. Ezek. 38, 39) rather than the Assyrian. the mighty ruler still farther north, who will have strengthened in vain “the king of the north” of Daniel (i.e. the last Assyrian of the other prophets). It is therefore as easy to confound these two (for both express the same policy), as most also identify in error the last ruler of the Roman beast with his political vassal but religious chief, the Antichrist who reigns over the apostate Jews in Palestine. “At the noise of the tumult

the peoples are fled; at the lifting of Thyself the nations are scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered as the caterpillar gathereth: as locusts leap, shall they leap upon it. Jehovah is exalted, for He dwelleth on high; He hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness." It is likely, if not certain, that Sennacherib furnished the historic occasion for this as for the previous enemy; for as of old, so at the close both are beyond measure haughty, ambitious, all-exacting, and truce-breakers. The question is, To what, as His aim, does the Holy Spirit direct our faith? Those whose system it is to see little but the shell, cannot be expected to taste the fruit. They cannot learn God's mind who hear only an Isaiah, or a deutero-Isaiah. But it is a judgment of hypocrites in Zion (14) as well as of the last proud enemy that invades the land; and no wonder, for "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." Jehovah is judge, lawgiver, and king; He is unto Israel glorious and will save them. "Then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven iniquity." It is a divine forecast of Messianic deliverance and blessing here below.

In solemn contrast with this prospect is the closing call (Isa. 34) on nations and peoples, the earth and all its fulness, the world and all that comes forth of it, to that immense judgment of the nations and their armies in Bozrah and the land of Edom; with which Isa. 63, may be compared. Dr. Driver ventures to tax it with "glow of passion," recalling that which animates the prophecies against Babylon in Isa. 13 and Jer. 50, 51. He too cannot rise above man smarting from some recent provocation. This, with its style, disproves Isaiah's authorship, and

points to the period of the exile! God is not in the thoughts of this school, many of whom far exceed their English protégés, and are as scornful as the unbelieving rulers of Isa. 28, as blind toward scripture as the deep sleepers of Isa. 29, and as trustful in man's strength and wisdom, as the rebellious children of Isa. 30. What is this but paving the way for the apostasy that will surely come, before the Lord Jesus appears in judgment of living man? Part of that judgment is the scene here predicted in Idumea, followed immediately, and purposely without a break or a preface, by the reconciliation, not of believers only as now, but of all creation in the day of the Lord, Zion being His earthly centre. Compare Rom. 8:18-23, Eph. 1:10, Col. 1:20, Heb. 2:5, Rev. 20, 21. Our Lord, in Matt. 19:28, spoke of it as "the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory" (being now seated on His Father's throne, Rev. 3:21); also the apostle Peter as "times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). There is an age to come before the judgment of the dead which ushers in the eternal day; and Christians are apt to think of the judgment of the living, when the Lord returns in glory, as little as the Jews did of the judgment of the dead. Both are revealed with full light in scripture; and they are distinct, though the Lord Jesus will execute both (John 5:22).

Isaiah 36

The historical episode of Isaiah 36-39 is the fourth part of the book, and bears in an important way on what precedes and follows. For the Assyrian, who threatened Jerusalem after the extinction of the kingdom of Israel, though in no way the fulfilment of the many prophecies

in all the foregoing portions of Isaiah's vision, was included in the divine perspective. Thus what was then accomplished became the earnest of all that remains to be fulfilled, much of it by express marks reserved for that day when, of all we seek out of the book of Jehovah and read, no one of them shall be missing, none shall want its mate; for His mouth, it hath commanded, and His spirit, it hath gathered, the doleful witnesses of His final judgments. One of the commonest forms of unbelief where scepticism is not extreme is to abuse the part accomplished in the past to set aside the incomparably more momentous times to come. The effect is to the last degree mischievous. The authority and truth of the divine word must be thereby undermined; because the language through such a misinterpretation seems to go far beyond the event, and has therefore to be explained away by supposed orientalisms and the like devices, even when positive failure is not imputed. Again, on this scheme Israel loses the special hope of Messiah and His kingdom, all the Gentiles their world-wide blessing, and creation fades too; not to say that the still higher purpose of glory in Christ over all things, which the church is to share with Him, is all brought to nought for souls so ensnared. For this unbelieving snare shrouds the Second man in darkness and reduces all at best to the first man, his emptiness and his doubts, his boasts and his sins. It is the enemy's work.

Hence the historical parenthesis serves the admirable purpose of enabling us now, and the godly Jewish remnant in the latter day, to discriminate between the past and the future of "the Assyrian" in the prophecy. For no instructed believer would contend that the prophet himself could then draw the line any more than

the pious of his generation, He expressed the mind of the Holy Spirit Who saw to the end from the beginning and never loses hold of the real unravelling of all complications in the triumphant establishment of God's kingdom. Then Messiah appears in His power and glory, and evil in every form is judged by His hand at once mild and strong, and righteousness reigns in peace and blessing Nor is there a weightier evidence conceivable of God inspiring the prophetic word than the fact that, while affording adequate accomplishment in the comparatively near, it commonly stops not short of what can only be fulfilled in the end of the age. All the parts of Isaiah's vision bear this witness, as do the prophets generally. But these chapters, their counterpart in 2 Kings 18-20, and more briefly 2 Chron. 32, contribute invaluable aid to spiritual intelligence, and forbid the error of assuming that all was exhausted in the overthrow of Sennacherib.

Thus reading, faith holds without question to every word in Isaiah 8, 9, and sees a final Assyrian at the head of peoples and far countries associated at the close to thwart Jehovah's purpose to blot out Israel and appropriate Immanuel's land. But Immanuel! God is with us: such is the remnant's watch-word in that day, though He be for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel — the unbelieving mass. But the despised light, Jesus of Nazareth, reappears, no longer in weakness to be the holy sacrifice, but in glory to break the oppressor's rod, and the arms of their foes shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire. And the government shall be upon His shoulder Who shall be called Wonderful, and no more "ideal King." Nor is there need to squeeze the words of Isaiah 10:28-32, any more

than from ver. 12 onward, to suit Sargon or Sennacherib, as well-meaning men do; still less to subscribe the sceptical alternative, that the prophet "intends" merely to draw an effective imaginative picture of the danger threatening Jerusalem. This imagination may seem proper to Dr. D. after Ewald, Schrader, and other free-thinkers; but believers reject and resent such profanity. God does not inspire false prophecy or baseless fancies. We have also seen a similar guard in the subsequence of the Assyrian overthrow on Jehovah's mountains, to Babylon's fall in Isa. 14. This is only true or even fairly explicable as future. Still plainer are Isa. 24-26 of the second part. And the third part as a whole demands the future day for any full answer. "For a consumption, and that determined upon the whole earth," though heard from Jehovah, awaits fulfilment; and it will be fulfilled, as surely as His mouth uttered it to and by the prophet. Jerusalem is not only to be invested but taken in part by the Assyrian of the last days (cf. Zech. 14 also); but, on his second attack after an interval to complete the capture, he not only falls but is punished condignly by divine interference, as in Isa. 30 etc.

The history therefore by inspired wisdom supplies precisely what is needed, — evidence of the highest kind which enables us to discriminate what has been already accomplished from the still more momentous things to come, which can be fulfilled only by-and-by in the final downfall of the Assyrian as of every other foe, and in the triumphant establishment of God's kingdom over the earth, when converted Israel shall be delivered by the Messiah returning in judgment of their Gentile adversaries as well as of their own apostates. It is clear

as light in the three scriptural accounts, each true to the divine design of the books wherein they respectively occur, that the great king never besieged Jerusalem, contenting himself with sending his servants and a considerable portion of his force from Lachish, whither Hezekiah had sent his confession and also the heavy fine imposed on him; that the Assyrian general in command (Tartan), the chief chamberlain (Rab-saris) and chief cup-bearer (Rab-shakeh) did come to Jerusalem, where the latter reviled Hezekiah, threatened the worst of siege — horrors in the ears of those sitting on the wall, and blasphemed Jehovah as if powerless like other gods; that thereon king Hezekiah and his servants rent their clothes, and, while the king humbled himself, his servants were sent to Isaiah, who gave a re-assuring answer from Jehovah to the king's petition. It is no less clear that Rabshakeh returned to his master, who had departed from Lachish to Libnah, and sent a message again to Hezekiah shorter and yet more blasphemous, and that Hezekiah spread the letter before Jehovah with prayer in the house of Jehovah, when the prophet sent to him a far fuller answer (which, as even sceptics confess, bears unmistakable marks of Isaiah's hand), that the Assyrian king should not approach the city, and should not shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a mount against it, but Jehovah would turn him back by the way he came. That very night the angel of Jehovah smote 185,000 in the Assyrian camp, "all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains." So Sennacherib returned with shame, and (when, we are not told) was slain by two of his own sons in the house of his god.

But all this, however striking as an earnest, fails in every respect both as to Israel and as to the Assyrian, if we see not two sieges of Jerusalem in the last days. For in the first the city will be taken, so far at leash as that half the city shall go forth into captivity, while the residue shall not be cut off from it. But in the second Jehovah shall go forth against those nations, the Assyrian being their chief; how utter the confusion and ruin, many scriptures bear witness, and notably of the Assyrian consigned to the doom prepared of old, executed then, as the N.T. shows also for the Beast and the False Prophet at the end of the age.

It may be added for consideration, that the sickness which befell Hezekiah, the record of which follows in Isa. 38, yields its own divine lesson. For as the two chapters before give the type of the outward deliverance (partially executed then fully when the Lord Jesus appears in His glory), so here is the type of the inner ground of all complete deliverance in the sickness unto death of David's son, prefiguring His sufferings Who really died and as really rose from the dead, whereby Jehovah will make an everlasting covenant with Israel, even the sure mercies of David. Compare Acts 13:34, and 2 Tim. 2:8.

Hezekiah however was not the Son of promise; so that even 2 Chronicles does not pass by the sad result of a heart lifted up with pride before the princely ambassadors from Babylon. And the prophet comes to the king (Isa. 39), convicts him of the sin, and pronounces the word of Jehovah, "Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." Here then is exactly the point of departure for the last comparatively continuous division of the book, the most distinct prediction of the Babylonish captivity. Unbelief therefore must bow silently and abashed, or strangely contend that Isa. 39 is not Isaiah's any more than those to the end of the book. This men who profess to be God's servants are no more afraid to do, than the wicked king of Judah to cut and burn the roll of Jeremiah. But God is not mocked, though judgment lingers; and the growing scepticism of the day is only making good the apostle's prophecy, even now awaiting its sure fulfilment, that the falling away must come first, and the man of sin be revealed, before the day of the Lord.

Isaiah 40-48

Having now come to the main effort of scepticism against "the vision of Isaiah," which denies to the noblest of the prophets the last and noblest portion of his prophecy, let us examine with more detail the scripture before us, and the argument of the neo-critics, if argument it can be called. For it assumes, what they ought to prove, that the prophet must have lived in the Babylonian exile while Cyrus was pursuing his career of conquest, and that the Jews there were in despair or indifferent, to whom these chapters were addressed to arouse and expostulate, by announcing the certainty of the approaching restoration. It assumes that such an immersion of the prophet's spirit into the future is not only without parallel in the O.T., but contrary to the nature of prophecy. For this rests on the basis of the

prophet's own age and corresponds to the needs then felt, however far-reaching into the future. Transient flights forward are allowed; but such a sustained transference to the future as Isaiah would imply, for these chapters, if his, is held to be against all example, and to indicate a prophet writing toward the close of the captivity! What they call the internal evidence is their chief ground: — Jerusalem often represented as ruined and deserted, the Jews suffering at the hands of the Chaldeans, and the prospect of return imminent, with the prophet addressing them in person, as not contemporaries of Ahaz and. Hezekiah, but exiles in Babylon. Minute as well as more general traits of style, and other spiritual traits are supposed to confirm the conclusion of their difference from the undisputed writings of Isaiah. But what is here given expresses their principal and common plea, whatever the points of difference otherwise.

It is well to observe, by the way, how little the question turns on profound Hebrew scholarship, which their followers everywhere parade as if it were the grand if not sole qualification for judging aright. Whereas it is certain that the stress if their hypothesis lies on that which is open to all.

Our English Professors do not go so far as some who have greatly influenced them. But the well-known F. Hitzig ("Der Proph. Jes., 1833," a work which Dr. D. says is "the source of much that is best exegetically in more recent commentaries") lets out the evil root of unbelief. "A prophetic prescience must be limited to the notion of foreboding, and to the deductions from patent facts taken in combination with real or supposed truths. Prophets were bounded like other men (!) by the horizon

of their own age; they borrowed the object of their soothsaying (!!) from their present; and excited by the relations of their present, they spoke to their contemporaries of what affected other people's minds or their own, occupying themselves only with that future whose rewards or punishments were likely to reach their contemporaries. For exegesis the position is impregnable (!) that the prophetic writings are to be interpreted in each case out *of the relations belonging to the time of the prophet; and from this follows as a corollary the critical canon: that that time, those time-relations, out of which a prophetic writer is explained, are his times, his time-relations; to that time he must be referred as the date of his own existence" (pp. 463-468)!!

It is hard to conceive a infidel exclusion of God from inspiration. Believers will surely reject a canon which rests on the merest assumption, and cleave to the apostle's authoritative words which deny that prophecy was ever brought by man's will, but men spake from God, moved or borne along by the Holy Spirit. It is then a question of His wisdom Who deigns to vouchsafe no little variety in His communications by the prophets. Here we are discussing not only the most copious but the most varied and comprehensive of all the O.T. company; and Isaiah had already uttered a numerous set of predictions. For these occasion was given in the moral ruin of Israel and even Judah, which faithful kings could not retrieve, however for a time a stay and means of transient blessing. But even then the prophet's word from Jehovah exposed the ever growing evil, called to repentance, and set forth assured deliverance in the end. This was not a partial return from captivity; but

glory and righteousness reigning in the chosen people; and not they only, but all the nations flowing to the centre of Jehovah's house established on the top of the mountains and lifted above the hills. In vain have the fathers as well as moderns become wise in their own conceits, denying the hope of Israel by-and-by to exalt Christendom now. Rationalists see that this application is groundless, and, having no faith in the true and future fulfilment, count it "ideal," and the prophecy a mistaken dream. It would, indeed, be the grossest perversion to contend that the glorious hopes in Isa. 2:1-4 and Isa. 4:2-6 were realised in the return from Babylon, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, or the Jewish religion since then. How verified will every word be, when on the repentance of the Jews God sends the Lord Jesus, Whom heaven has received till times of restoring all things, of which God's holy prophets have spoken since time began! So St. Peter preached; so we believe. For the present the Jews believe not; and the rationalists even less.

The fact is too, that the series of "burdens" in our prophecy opened with as exact a parallel as the case admits of in this book without going farther. For there we had the destruction of Babylon portrayed in the most vivid colours, though there was no historic basis stated in either Isa. 13 or 21; and the implacable part the Medes played in the former, not Medes only but Elam, the Persian contingent; and the destruction is on that first occasion pursued to the end in the day of Jehovah, so as to prefigure the imperial system as a whole judged for ever, with the full and final deliverance of God's ancient people — the "all Israel" which shall be saved and set in their own land in that great day, as Isa. 14

shows. But the leaving out of Babylon makes an irreparable gap in the circle of these “burdens”; whereas its judgment most properly opens Jehovah’s dealings with the nations, as it first was placed in an imperial position, which in one form or another goes down to the end; and the subsequent notice of the Assyrian, in its exactly proper place (Isa.14), becomes meaningless when taken out of this connection — a mere waif or stray. Hence, these sceptics are compelled by their fatal system to deny these chapters also to Isaiah. It is ever so with scripture no less than morals: one falsehood stuck to soon calls for more to give semblance of consistency. Nothing delivers souls but the truth of God. This they do not look for, and so are in the dark. They confide in the reasonings of Koppe, Hitzig, and such like. Their sole faith is in themselves, even if they shrink from being so outspoken, and perhaps are yet unprepared for the same degree of profanity. The very small residue of faith, which Dr. D. professes in page 230 for the purpose of avoiding misconception, will neither stand in the day of trial, nor does it save his scheme from the charge of incredulity even now.

It is a lack of spiritual intelligence to expect the same method in God’s inspiration of Isaiah as with Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any other. Each had his own individuality, as God had His special design.

Thus Jeremiah, heartbroken, did very characteristically direct his expostulation to the conscience of the Jews, alike to king, priests, prophets, and people; as he also held out Babylon rising into its peculiar supremacy on the fall of Jerusalem, but for its idolatry destroyed and the Jew set free by the conqueror, the type of a greater judgment and a full deliverance at the end of the age. At

the same time, as the moral prophet he proclaims the virtues of the new covenant for all the people restored to the land in that day. But Isaiah had a far higher flight and larger scope than Jeremiah. Yet the latter, who drank the bitter cup. of Jerusalem's sorrow more deeply than any other prophet, was given to look beyond their fall to the day "when they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north, to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers."

Ezekiel beheld the throne of God judging the city and in particular the house of God (instead of thence governing the nations) till it depart, but at the end returning in glory and blessing to dwell in Israel's midst for ever; as Daniel sees the Gentile powers, as "beasts" during the judgment of Israel.

But Isaiah is distinct from Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Daniel, important as each was in his differing place. It was Isaiah's function (before the days of the captivity, or the setting aside of the Jews as God's sphere of manifested government) to bring out in a fulness and splendour all his own the boundless prospect of God's dealings with Israel, and His purposes of glory which centre in Christ and His kingdom. Judah being still recognised, the Assyrian figures in the first series. When "the burdens" on the nations follow (Isa. 13-27), Babylon comes at once into view, as about to have the special lot of setting Jerusalem aside for its apostate idolatry, till itself becomes the object of divine judgment because of its

rebellious idolatry in order to set the people free. Not only would this divine panorama have been incomplete without Babylon, but it was only perfect by beginning with the first (or golden head) of the imperial world-powers, and prefigures the last in the day of the Lord. Even Egypt and Assyria are to be blessed of Jehovah when He takes Israel as His inheritance; but there is no merciful restoration in store for Babylon, whether Chaldean or Roman: strong is the Lord God Who judged her. We need not pursue this more, but avail ourselves of a believing use of Isa. 13, 14, to vindicate the momentous series, which follows the historical section (Isa. 36-39) of which we have spoken briefly.

Here the folly of unbelief is the less excusable because of Isaiah's prediction of the Babylonish captivity which closes the history. It was an awful sentence for the pious king to hear, and to hear it from Isaiah as the fruit of his own faithless ostentation to the heathen; which was the worse after the wondrous interposition of Jehovah, both against the Assyrian, and in raising himself as it were from death. It was not merely Hezekiah's offspring humbled in the dust before a Gentile master: Jehovah would have no throne longer on earth. His throne had been the unique throne of David's house (1 Chron. 29:23). Other monarchs reign by God's providence. But Jehovah reigned through David and his line only, looking onward no doubt to a greater than them all — the Messiah, as truly Jehovah as He Who swore to raise Him up to reign. Till He come to take the throne of David (He is now on His Father's throne, expressly not on His own, Rev. 3:21), power is transferred to the Gentiles. But they, though ordained of God, never had and have not any such title. We may judge better by the Lamentations

what this blank was to a holy Israelite. The chosen people too were henceforth Lo-ammi, as Hosea declares.

Hence the appropriateness and power of the words which open Isa. 40, a preface to all those that follow, especially to Isa. 41-48. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her time of toil is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah’s hand double for all her sins.” How exactly in keeping with Isaiah! In his earlier strains he thus repeated warning and menace to the foe, as in Isa. 8:9, 10; now with no less force, but with deep pathos to the people after sore affliction and shame for their sins, his heart goes with the divine message of consolation. And yet critics say, It must be another! As if he who spared not the Galatians was not the same apostle that poured out his heart into the bosom of the Philippians. Strange criticism in good sooth!

But more: conceive for a moment the absurdity of such a prophecy as Isaiah’s ending with the dirge of Isa. 39. Conceive again the prodigy of an equal of Isaiah pouring forth toward the close of the exile suddenly and continuously the otherwise unparalleled strains which roll on to the closing Isa. 66. Where is the historic basis at that epoch for such strains? Or is there the smallest approach to them in Ezekiel or in Daniel, whose times and circumstances afford the nearest points of contact? Surely their prophecies, however admirably adapted to God’s aim then and there, stand in marked contrast of character, colouring, and contents. Here we have Isaiah’s old affluence and dignity, depth of feeling, elevation of thought, beauty of language, sense of divine majesty combined with the most affecting loving

kindness; but there is now not only a more majestic flow in style, but truth more searching and profound, a deeper probing of idolatry and rebelliousness, Messiah's sufferings and glory set out as never before, resulting in the richest blessing to God's glory for Jew and Gentile and the universe, nowhere else in the O.T. so fully revealed.

Take the certain and solemn fact already alluded to, that from the Babylonish captivity God no longer owned the people as His, save providentially and in purpose; and that the return of a feeble remnant was but provisional, and mainly to test them afresh, not as witnesses of the one Jehovah God, but of the Messiah. One sees at once that the bearing of the very first words goes far beyond. The sentence of Lo-ammi (not-my-people) holds from first to, last of the four empires of Dan. 2 and 7, which only meet their doom when the Son of man appears from heaven to execute the judgment of the quick. Whatever little earnest may have been enjoyed by those who went back to the land after the fall of Babylon, the prophetic word reveals a vast deal more, as it contemplates nothing short of a complete restoration to divine favour for the Israel of "that day." Hence the force of "My people." Then there will be no room for attenuating at all the consolation of the message: the appointed hardship will be over; the iniquity pardoned.

The great principles of this immense change follow. First, a spiritual preparation is announced (vers. 3-8). Now this is by all the synoptic evangelists applied to the mission of John the Baptist; and the fourth Gospel declares that the favoured herald of the Messiah applied it to himself. To give all these the lie would cost the unbelieving school little, though probably their English

disciples might wince. But if the inspired interpretation is to rule, the rationalist house is proved to be built on the sand. For what had the Baptist's testimony to do with the close of the exile? And who that accepts the divine authority of the N.T. can deny that the prophet does bound forward at once many centuries? — the very truth which these critics reject with one consent, for their own gratuitous assumption, which is as opposed to the prophetic text in the O.T. as to the inspired comment in the N.T.

Where again is there the faintest shadow of a restoration from Babylon in vers. 9-11? in 12-26? or in 27-31? We have indeed in Ezra the divine account of the remnant's return after the striking proclamation of liberty by Cyrus. Is it really so that they regard that little and feeble return as fulfilling, "Behold, your God! Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his recompence before him. He shall feed his flock as a shepherd," etc. It was the king of Persia who took the initiative; and Ezra himself confesses later on "We (the returned Jews) are bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the ruins thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem" (Isa. 9:9). Ezra, an inspired man, saw no such way prepared through the wilderness as corresponded with the bright promise, and would have rejected as blasphemous that the return. of the remnant then was the triumphal progress of Israel's king, as a Conqueror Zionward, leading before Him His prize of war, the recovered nation itself. Never, never will this

be, as the rejected Messiah told them, till they shall say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD.” Alas! how different is all yet, while that word of apostate unbelief stands unjudged, “We have no king but Caesar.” More manifestly than ever are they Lo-ammi.

To the believer it is a prophecy awaiting its fulfilment. Let men beware of palming their worthless expositions on the word of our God. For the consequence of it is that those who lean on man fear not to treat His word with the contempt due only to these misreadings of unbelief. How plain to faith, that the true bearing of what is thus travestied coalesces with Isa. 25:9-12, Isa. 35: Isa. 52:7-12, Isa. 63:10-12, etc.! How absurd to apply all to the return!

It is quite true then that in the vision the prophet has before him the things to come. Even in this introductory chapter it is John the Baptist he hears, the herald of Christ; as he next in the Spirit calls on the Jews to behold Jehovah triumphing on their behalf in His day, to the shame of human presumption, and yet more of idols, to the cheer and joy and strength of His own that have no might, for His is all might, wisdom, and tender mercy.

But repentance, which John preached and symbolised in his baptism, is by the action of the word on the conscience. Thus the Spirit withers up all confidence in self; and this is as much needed by “the people” as by sinners of the Gentiles. For all flesh is grass: surely the people is grass.” Only God’s word abides for ever, the incorruptible seed whereby any are begotten again through faith. This Israel will learn livingly.

Then shall they appreciate the grace of their divine Messiah. As His glory and power subserve His goodness

to His people, so will they rejoice that their Shepherd is none less than Jehovah, Who counts all creation a very little thing, and the nations less than nothing. What a death-blow to a likeness of Him! — to an image graven by man! He that marshals the host of heaven, and calls each by name, gave poor Jacob his princely name; and He, far from fainting, imparts power to the faint; and they that wait upon Him shall renew strength, as Israel will in that day.

The exordium of Isa. 40. laid down clearly that the pledged and stable comfort God designs for His people is inseparable from their repentance by the word and Spirit of God judging nature; as the glad tidings centre in their divine Messiah, Who will feed His flock like a Shepherd, the Ruler and Judge of all the earth, Whose wisdom and power have already shone in creation, and reduce all the nations to a cipher compared with Him, to say nothing of likening Him in their folly to a graven image, or of Israel's unbelief of His watchful eye and efficacious succour. He will surely appear at the fit moment.

Isa. 41 follows this up and opens His first indictment (40-48) in the great controversy with Israel. It was the idolatry of the nations, and even of Shem's line, which gave occasion to the dealing with Abraham, chosen, called, and faithful, as the root of promise here below. So when the time came, itself predicted (Gen. 15), to deliver Israel and judge the nation which had held them in bondage, it was avowedly "against all the gods of Egypt" that Jehovah executed judgment. Israel, witness of the one true and living God, failed even under the king of peace; who went after other gods in his old age, and the kingdom was divided. Ephraim, guilty from the

first of idolatry for political expediency, was at length broken in pieces that it should not be a people. Judah would follow backsliding Israel still more treacherously "till there was no remedy;" and, because of this persistent idolatry in the house of David, God cave them over to the Chaldeans and set up the imperial system of the Gentiles till the Lord appears for their judgment, and for the full and final deliverance, not of Judah only but of Israel, then to be restored spiritually as well as nationally, and ruled to the joy of all the earth by Him Whose right it is, when idolatry is judged and perishes for ever. Then only and thus shall the earth be filled, surely not without the Spirit's power, with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea.

The return from Babylon was but an earnest of the restoration which hinges on Israel's heart turning to Christ. Then, not before, is the veil taken away (2 Cor. 3:16). When their soul loathed Him here below, His staff Beauty was cut asunder, and the covenant with all the peoples was broken; when He was bought for a slave's price and crucified, He cut Bands, and broke the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (Zech. 11). Every Israelitish hope was buried in His grave, but will rise again in Him at the allotted season: for what word of God can perish?

Meanwhile, founded on Him Who, dead and risen, is now glorified on high, the Holy Spirit is come to gather the children of God and joint-heirs with Christ into one body, the church, which is therefore a heavenly system though for the present on earth, but united to Him the Head above. Those who compose that body are accordingly called to suffer in conformity to His cross, sustained by the assurance of His love and all the privileges of

possessed redemption as well as union, and waiting for the fellowship of His glory, Who is coming for us that we may be with Him where He is. Hence we stand contrasted with Israel in most momentous respects of walk and worship, privileges and hopes, as the N.T. shows fully. We may and ought to profit by such scriptures as are before us; but they treat, not of the church, but of God's ancient people, about to be swept into Babylon, yet even before that captivity comforted with the assurance of deliverance and restoration through divine mercy and power, only by and by to be adequately appreciated.

The chapter then begins with a summons, which Isa. 1 attests as the prophet's style, to the islands and peoples. Jehovah deigns to plead! "Let us come near together to judgment." It is again a question between the true God and vain images. Because His people served not Jehovah their God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, therefore, as Moses predicted (Deut. 28), should they serve their enemies in hunger and in thirst, etc., plucked from off the land of promise, and scattered over the earth. Accordingly Jehovah demands, Who raised up from the east him whom righteousness calleth to its foot? The God Who knew declared beforehand by His prophet. It was He indeed Who wrought as well as spoke. "He shall give nations before him, and make him rule over kings; he shall give [them] as dust to his sword, as driven stubble to his bow. He shall pursue them and pass in safety, a path with his feet he shall not go;" i.e., so should he speed. The description of the conqueror is resumed in ver. 25, as one from the north as here from the cast, which singularly met in Cyrus the Persian, who

welded the Medes into his kingdom before his crowning overthrow of Babylon. But he is not yet named as in the end of Isa. 44 and the beginning of 45. The effort of jealous rabbis followed by some Christians to apply the earlier words to Abraham is vain. It is a prophetic challenge on His part Whose power could make His words good, in contrast with dumb and lifeless idols, to which, as tutelary deities, dread of the avenger drove the Gentiles (ver. 5-7), in their ignorance of Him Who calleth the generations from the beginning, the First and with the last.

But Israel are addressed in terms most assuring as God's servant; they were not to fear: He would uphold them, and confound all inflamed against them. Their weakness is most pointedly owned (14); yet in virtue of their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, they should thresh mountains and hills, which when scattered like chaff should leave Israel to joy in Jehovah, Who would interpose for the needy in the wilderness, even more gloriously than of old, that they might be satisfied it was His doing and even creating. And in the renewed challenge, which repeats the reference to the as yet unnamed Cyrus, the test of predicting is made most definite. "Bring forward your arguments, saith the king of Jacob." What a witness to the Israel of that future day, that He is not ashamed to acknowledge them! "Let them bring forth and declare to us what shall happen: show the former things what they are, that we may apply our heart and know their issues or make us know things to come. Declare the things to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods. Yea, do good or evil, that we may be astonished (or examine) and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an

abomination is he that chooseth you." Then the veil is removed from the conqueror, whom God alone revealed, i.e. Who first before any other to Zion (said), Behold, behold them!

Is it not impudent unbelief, in the face of such a divine claim, for modern rationalism to found on the prophetic style, which speaks in the Spirit of the future as if the past or present, that it was written while the brilliant progress of events was going on, just before Babylon fell and the captivity ended and the return began? Nay more, the sceptical hypothesis implies knavery in the pseudo-Isaiah, and especially in him or those who put these chapters into the vision of Isaiah. It is hard to imagine a more diabolical thrust at prophecy, however covered up under soft words. Proof there is none. The reasoning simply assumes that Isaiah could not be the prophet, because the reference to Cyrus' Medo-Persian career, the overthrow of Chaldean idolatry, the fall of Babylon, and the return, argue the writer cognisant of these momentous events as on the eve of accomplishment, the earlier of them actually a fact. That is, to any upright mind the critical hypothesis insinuates fraud.

Now the far later prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 25) did define the length of the exile in Babylon as 70 years; and Daniel (Dan. 9) is declared to have learned thereby the approaching change. The sole imposture is in these critics. Those holy men of God in no way exaggerated the event, long set out by Isaiah, much later by Jeremiah, and recognised by Daniel, the only one really in Babylon, as just about to be. So far from elation, the last gave himself to prayer and humiliation for the sins of Jerusalem and the people. Daniel in fact did not go up

with the returning remnant, learning (by a fresh prophecy on that very occasion) how far the return would be from the promised restoration, and that the Messiah, when He came after a determinate interval, would be cut off and have nothing, instead of even then bringing in for Israel His righteous reign. All this is in perfect accord with the chapters before us. Isa. 41:8-20 was in no way fulfilled in the return. It is still unaccomplished. The return, important as it may have been, was a mere pledge of Israel's glorious hope; and the aged prophet showed his believing estimate of it by remaining where he was, and received a subsequent assurance from God that, far from losing aught, he should rest and stand in his lot at the end of the days (Isa. 12). The promised blessing of the people is after unexampled tribulation, and Jehovah will make them, when truly repentant, a judicial instrument, "worm Jacob" and "mortals of Israel" though they be, to break down and scatter the proud power of all their foes to God's glory.

What confirms the truth, and disproves the human shallowness of neology, is Isa. 42:1-4 and its certain application to the Messiah, unless we despise the inspiration of the N.T. also, and count sceptics more reliable than St. Matthew (Matt. 12:17-21), who vouches likewise for Isaiah as the prophet. It is Jehovah's Servant pre-eminently, and beyond all comparison. Not Cyrus is here, not Israel though in Isa. 41:8 called His servant, but Christ, exclusively said (Isa. 42:6) to be given "for a covenant of the people and a light of the Gentiles." It is not an ideal figure, but the real Messiah. It was not yet the hour to lift up His voice in judgment, as the blind Jews desired, though it must have been their own

destruction. Meek in heart He sought not glory but to do His Father's will, rejected by an unbelieving people, and about to go far lower to save them or any; so as to be a light to the Gentiles when Israel will have none of Him, caring for the weakest and in no way discouraged till He have set judgment, and the isles shall wait for His law, as in the day of His open power and glory, when all shall be fulfilled, not an earnest only. Then will close the former things, and a new song will be sung to Jehovah as in a new age, which neither the return nor even the first advent responded to, though the latter led to higher and eternal things not here contemplated. Idolatry still flourishes, even in Christendom. And Israel had been verily and exceedingly besotted (vers. 18-20), and therefore degraded of Jehovah to the lowest. There is no real difficulty in seeing only Israel in His blind and deaf servant, the strongest contrast with Messiah. The Revisers correct "perfect" into "at peace," as the younger Lowth "perfectly instructed" and the elder compares "Mussulman." It refers to their full endowment of privilege; and in no way is it moral, for they are censured and judged for their idolatry, who should have been a witness for one true and living God to all mankind. Therefore were they given over to severe chastening and humiliation.

Isa. 43 dwells on Israel's relation to Jehovah, in view not of their sins and their punishments, but of His unfailing fidelity in sovereign grace. Clearly this awaits fulfilment, as it goes far beyond any past instalment. No wonder that those who adopt the fatal error of limiting prophecy to an immediate future are incapable of seeing or expounding the truth, and must regard the inspired vision as utter exaggeration, to say the least. But the

fault is solely in themselves. Jehovah will infallibly stand by Israel, and more conspicuously in the future than in the brightest memorial of the past, and bring their seed from the east and the west, from the north and the south (5, 6). This far exceeds the return from Babylon; and not Gentiles, but Israelites only are here in view.

The blind votaries of idols are once more summoned; and as Jehovah guarantees the redemption of Israel, so He reiterates the proof of a true God in His Predictions, committed to them as His witnesses, and here reveals the fall of Babylon expressly, and of the Chaldeans whose cry is in the ships (14), again claiming to be Israel's king, when they had none outwardly. It is not only that the new should surpass the old, but Jehovah reveals that they may know it beforehand. To limit prophecy to its evidence when accomplished is to take the place, unconsciously, of an unbeliever. Jehovah is not silent about His people's sins: so much the more wonderful is the declaration of His full forgiveness and rich blessing for His own sake (ver. 16-28, Isa. 44:1-5). What Christian can allege that this is as yet completely fulfilled? Christendom, it is true, long gave up faith in God's mercy to Israel by-and-by, in flat opposition to Rom. 11, and many other N.T. scriptures, to say nothing of the O.T. Ancients and moderns are apt to be alike guilty of high-mindedness in this respect. God's gifts and calling abide; and Christendom will be judged, no less than Israel; but His mercy shall triumph yet. O the depth of His riches!

We have seen the glory of Jehovah set forth in creation and providence, but not more than in His gracious condescension and unfailing care of the people whom He chose and separated to Himself as His servant,

witness of the one true and living God against all false gods and especially idols, the snare of no nation more than of Israel. This was especially seasonable, when the prophet had solemnly set before Hezekiah the ruin even of the residue who clung to David's house, when that royal stein, on which their standing and hopes depended, should be carried with all their treasures to Babylon. For on earth was no mother, no patroness, of idolatry, more ancient, powerful, or renowned than Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms." What then seemed so much to compromise His name as that Babylon should sweep His people off the land He gave them into captivity? On the contrary it was because of apostacy from Jehovah for Gentile idols, and this at length and persistently in David's house, that Jehovah gave them up to a land of graven images where men were mad upon idols. Judah's sin became their punishment, that they might learn, both from Jerusalem and in Babylon, the brutish delusion and destructive shame of trust in gods that man made.

Hence, long before the time, the prophet told them of the judgment Jehovah would visit on Babylon, by raising up one from the east and the north as avenger in righteousness. This was of so much the deeper interest to the chosen people, because its capture would open the door for their return. Yet who can overlook that the terms of the prediction, while definitely applying to both events, go on without doubt to Christ? Nor is it merely Christ in the past but in the future also, times for restoring all things, which the apostle Peter preached (Acts 3), as God spoke of them by His holy prophets since time began. It is a marked and integral part of the testimony that God herein challenges the devotees of

idolatry to declare what shall happen, and things in (not the near future but) “the latter end of them.”

The assumption therefore that this must have been a wise. anticipation, when Cyrus was in his mid career of conquest, and a very few years before the fall of Babylon, is not alone absolutely without proof, but morally irreconcileable with the language and argument of the prophet. To suppose the union of the Medes with the Persians as an actual fact, and Cyrus already triumphant in N. W. and Central Asia, is to make the prediction a vain mendacious boast, instead of a communication divine beyond question. If it be Isaiah’s, as its place professes it to be, following his humbling words to Hezekiah, what can be more forcible in establishing the claims of the one true God, raising up the avenger and unveiling the future (itself but the pledge of One still more glorious) to the Jew when the crisis so loudly called for it? Yet in doing so He laid their iniquity bare with an unsparing hand, even while He calls them to sing a new song to Himself in view of a deliverance, not yet fulfilled but sure, when the day of sovereign grace dawns on repentant Israel, renouncing their own righteousness and looking to Him Whom they pierced. Nature began with all things good from God, which man, listening to the enemy and sinning, reduced to ruin; grace begins with the ruin, gives the Second man and last Adam to bear the judgment of the sins, brings in divine righteousness, and establishes at last a new heaven and a new earth. Israel’s was a similar story over again; and so is Christendom’s. In all God is faithful, above all in Christ by virtue of His person and work, Who vindicated God as to the past, present, and future; as He must reign till He has put all the enemies

under His feet. When all things have been subjected to Him, then shall the Son also be subjected to Him that subjected all things to Him, that God [Father, Son, and Holy Spirit] may be all in all, instead of all things being under the glorified Man in the previous kingdom.

After this richest encouragement to His undeserving people (Isa. 44:1-5), He again raises His controversy with idols, and sets out the folly as well as wickedness of man's making his object of worship (6-20), with a most touching appeal to Israel, formed to be His servant; as in view of sovereign grace He will dispel their transgressions like a mist and their gins like a cloud (21-23). He asserts His frustration of lying signs and senseless diviners, while He confirms His declared counsel, saying of Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah Ye shall be built, as of the deep, Be thou dry, and of Cyrus (for now he is named), He is my shepherd and shall accomplish all my pleasure, who will say of Jerusalem, She shall be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid (24-28).

So, notoriously and punctually, it came to pass: none need travel beyond the written word of God to learn it. Jehovah, with power supreme, has not only the knowledge of the end from the beginning, but imparts conspicuously of that knowledge for the sustenance of faith, at the very time when His people, because of faithlessness, were reduced to be no longer a vessel of His power. It was Jehovah that held Cyrus' right hand to subdue nations before him, to break in pieces the doors of brass, and to cut asunder the bars of iron. For Israel's sake He named Cyrus, though he knew not Jehovah, that men might know from east and from west that there is none beside Him. It was He that raised up Cyrus in

righteousness, to build His city, and let go His captives, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts. Yet this unparalleled return of the Jew from Babylon is as evidently but the shadow of an everlasting salvation, not yet Israel's, when idols and their worshippers shall be in the dust, and in Jehovah all Israel shall be justified and shall glory; yea, and every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall swear (Isa. 45:23).

In Isa. 46 follows the utter humiliation of Bel and Nebo, chief idols of Babylon, more manifestly impotent than the beasts that bore them, unable to save, and themselves gone into captivity. Again is Jehovah contrasted in His loving patience toward Israel with the image that could neither move nor speak nor save; whereas He was giving proof, in their deep depression for their sins and especially their idolatries, that Jehovah is God, and none else, and none like Him, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done (to be shown full soon in calling a bird of prey from the cast, the man of His counsel from a far country), though Zion has still to await salvation, and Israel Jehovah's glory, which faith would never count far off.

But ere that great day the virgin daughter of Babylon must sit in the dust (Isa. 47). Warned solemnly as no Gentile monarch had ever been, a warning recalled and interpreted by a Jewish prophet of the captivity, "the head of gold" did not take these things to heart nor remember the end thereof. Hence he that had long before predicted the captivity, now followed it up with Babylon's desolation to come suddenly, she not knowing nor suspecting nor able to ward it off, spite of enchantments and sorceries, spite of astrologers,

stargazers, and moon-prognosticators: there is none to save Babylon.

The controversy closes in Isa. 48, wherein Jehovah appeals to Jacob's house, called by the name of Israel, and come forth out of Judah's waters: a remarkable description which clothes the Jews with the honoured name of him, who, wrestling with God and with men, prevailed. Here again Jehovah reminds them of His declaring the former things long ago, lest, with their neck of iron sinew and their brow of brass, they should impute to their idol what the Eternal had long predicted and at last accomplished. Now He caused them to hear new things, that they might be kept, if it could be, from their perverse rebelliousness, and not be cut off but be refined in the furnace of affliction. He the First and He the Last again challenged which among them had declared these things? It was their Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, Who, alike by this very prophecy as by others, bore divine witness to His witnesses; and by the Gentile chief He raised up against Babylon, He would wean them from futile images to the assurance of His own sovereign goodness and unmerited fidelity. For there is no peace, saith Jehovah, unto the wicked." And what wickedness grosser or more ungrateful in Israel than idolatry?

Yes, there is a deeper depth to devour the guilty people; and this the prophet opens as the still more awful indictment laid to their charge in the next section.

Isaiah 49

Here the ground taken by neo-criticism is untenable, self-evidently to all but unbelievers. For the section of the prophecy which Isa. 49 opens is beyond just

question occupied with Messiah's rejection and its results. This is the second and still graver indictment alleged against the Jews; fruit of the same unbelief, though under deeper mercy despised, which had left Jehovah for idols the charge against them in the previous section. Hence Babylon and Cyrus disappear now, as Assyria has no place in either. Nor can any statement be less accurate than Dr. Driver's (Lit. O.T. 217) that "these chapters [Isa. 40-46] form a continuous prophecy, dealing throughout with a common theme, viz., Israel's restoration from exile in Babylon." In a measure it may be accepted as applicable to the first of the three parts, though even here it falls lamentably short of its full scope. For in the very preface (Isa. 40), we have, if we accept the interpretation of the N.T. as authoritative, John the Baptist's ministry, and the coming of Jehovah in the person of the Messiah, His appearing in glory and in triumph over idols, as tender and faithful as He is matchless in power and wisdom. We have also a result in sovereign grace far beyond anything realised by the returned remnant. If these men dare to say that the prophecy is false and is never to be fulfilled, let them stand out as open infidels. They may not all be so; yet they are all doing the enemy's work.

The truth is that "the servant" is the key-note of the continuous prophecy. It runs through all the three divisions, each of which has its special aim and proper character. Hence in Isa. 41:8 we have "Israel my servant," responsible to bear witness of the one living God against idolatry, but utterly failing and therefore captives in Babylon (the ancient champion of image-worship), till Jehovah raise up a deliverer from the north-east, named expressly before the section closes,

His shepherd to perform all His pleasure as to Jerusalem and the temple, as well as to execute judgment on Babylon and its dark superstition. Even here, however, and in an early part (Isa. 42:1-4), care was taken to point out a “Servant” incomparably greater than Israel, Cyrus, or any other, Who should come in meekness, but not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law. How different from His blind “servant” in the same chapter, His people abandoned to heathen spoliation for their more guilty heathenism, whatever over-abounding mercy may do another day not yet arrived!

With Isa. 49 the heavier and more heinous charge is pressed. The prophet sets before us throughout the section the aggravated guilt of the returned remnant in rejecting their own, the true, Messiah. It is a striking instance of a principle common to the N.T. as well as the O.T., the replacement of the faithless “servant” by the faithful One, of Israel the empty vine by Messiah the True Vine, the fleshly son of God called out of Egypt by His Only-begotten in due time. Indeed it is the question for faith and unbelief between the first man and the Second, which underlies all revelation, and determines. the lot of every soul before whom it comes, for not time only but eternity. Messiah takes up Israel’s place, as Jehovah’s servant in Whom He will be glorified; but in view of His rejection He says (ver. 4), “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and vanity: yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work [or wages] with my God.” The next verse is the answer, which demonstrates the substitution of Messiah for Israel, not distinct only but for the present opposed to Him. “And now saith Jehovah that formed me from the

womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, that Israel may be gathered to him (yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah, and my God shall be my strength); and he said, It is a small thing that, thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will even give thee for light to Gentiles, to be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (vers. 5, 6). The text is here rendered in a form substantially as learned Jews prefer. What can be plainer, even if we had not the apostle's application in Acts 13, than that here we have the blessed result of the gospel for Gentiles, on the refusal of the Messiah by His own people? No doubt despising man joined the nation in its apostate abhorrence, and the Cross followed. This infinite grace made the ground of salvation indiscriminate to Jew or Gentile that believed: a state of things wholly distinct from what was before the first advent and what will follow the second, when Jehovah will prove that He never forgot Zion, but at length will contend with her enemies, and save her children then repentant and looking to Him Whom they pierced Thus verses 7, 8, quite confirm the grace now going out far and wide (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2), while the chapter passes on to the millennial rescue and exaltation of Israel on earth. All is due to the Servant, and is God's gracious use of His rejection. Meanwhile the Jew has lost Him as King in Zion; and the believer (whosoever he may be) has Him as Saviour, Lord, Priest, and Head in heavenly glory.

How does the self-styled higher criticism fare before this divine light? It is really, what the cross of Christ outwardly seemed, emptiness and vanity: an unspeakably sad sight, a mob of Jewish foes inciting Gentiles against Christ and God's inspired scripture,

with a traitor disciple playing into their hands! May they tremble at Jehovah's word, lest that come upon them which is spoken of in the prophets — lest they perish as despisers in their inexcusable unbelief. For no canon more pervades the school than the denial of true prophecy independently of local and actual indications, and especially of any unveiling of the distant future. Hence the foregone conclusion of incredulity. The question is begged. They neither prove nor disprove. They assume as their primary principle that "to base a promise upon a condition of things not yet existent, and without any point of contact with the circumstances or situation of those to whom it is addressed, is alien to the genius of prophecy" (Lit. O.T. 201). From the first prediction in the Bible to the last the very reverse is nearer the truth, allowing for the subordinate cases to which it may apply. From the great body of scriptural prophecy on the contrary is excluded private (i.e. isolated) solution; because it converges as the rule on the yet future kingdom when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah and His glory as the waters cover the sea. How transparently weak to deny the prophecies of Babylon or any other to Isaiah, because of a century or more, when their Great Unknown (itself the utmost folly for a prophet, and opposed to all inspired facts) beyond controversy predicts the postponement of Israel's hope through the rejection of Messiah many centuries after, the consequent grace to Gentiles, and the yet unaccomplished glory of Zion in the latter day when kings shall be nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers! This rationalism is the more irrational, because, in what they acknowledge as incontestable, the leap into that future vision of glory on earth and for Israel especially, is even more detailed in Isa. 2, 4, 9, 11,

12, so that the argument, if in courtesy it be so called, is as illogical and capricious as unbelieving.

But turning to Isa. 50, we have the new controversy of God carried on still more fully and profoundly. The Messiah is set forth evidently: the hidden glory of Jehovah on one side, and on the other the humiliation in grace of the dependent and obedient Servant, so competent and ready in love toward others, yet rejected and abased to the uttermost, and after all the shame and suffering helped of God and justified: a justification, which the apostle in Rom. 8 was inspired to claim for the Christian in virtue of His sacrificial death. And this wondrous but true portrait, not of some ideal personage, but of our Lord Jesus Christ, so amply and closely verified in the N.T., is presumed to be drawn by the unknown prophet of the rationalists “toward the close of the Babylonian captivity”! Not one solid reason has ever been given for the hypothesis; but if we conceive it for the moment as certified fact, what would there be but the equally sure refutation of rationalism? What bearing on contemporary interests was there just before the return, more than in Hezekiah’s days when the captivity in Babylon had been announced? How these sceptics labour for the fire and weary themselves in vain, when they strive to rob Isaiah, not only here, but of such Isa. as 24-27, and 34, 35! Assign them to whom they please, the mouth of Jehovah has uttered them, and there shall be a fulfilment in the due time: blessed they that believe, wretched beyond utterance those that render null as to themselves the counsel of God. What point of contact with the circumstances of those addressed can be adduced for such predictions at one time rather than the other? To suppose an unknown prophet of the highest

rank equal to Isaiah, or superior, is itself a very unreasonable and uncalled for fancy; especially when incorporated with his writings, the greatest known. Even the shortest strain is carefully attributed to each writer; and on a human point of view, no one less needs — less admits of — a supplement than the stately son of Amoz; on divine ground, the effort savours of impiety, wholly subjective as it is. That the latter seven and twenty chapters are on the whole the grandest and most important of the book is beyond dispute. Nothing but the malignant revolutionary violence of modern infidelity accounts for the scheme; which after all leaves God's book in possession of true prediction of Christ many centuries before He came to fulfil the most momentous part, as He will surely come again to fulfil all that remains.

Isa. 51-52:12 apply the truth to the people of God or at least to the godly remnant of the future, regarded in their strict prophetic bearing. There is first a triple call: "Hearken to me, ye that follow righteousness" (vers. 1-3), "Listen (or attend) to me, my people" (vers. 4-6), and "Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness" (vers. 7-8); which indicate progress spiritually. Then follow three calls: first, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah" (vers. 9-16), a call for divine intervention; next, "Rouse thyself, rouse thyself standing, O Jerusalem" (vers. 17-23), an address to the city of God's choice; then a final "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion" (Isa. 52:1).

Then comes the joyful message, which certainly has not the smallest relation to the plain of Shinar, but to the high lands of Palestine, as the tidings coalesce not only with Isa. 40, but with 24-27, 32, 33, 35, indeed with 11,

12, and chapters earlier still. It would appear that, at this epoch of the future, Jews will be once more captives among the Gentiles, who then go out, priests and people, far more gloriously than the trembling remnant who should leave Babylon by the decree of Cyrus, or even the nation of old leaving Egypt in haste. We know from Zech. 14:2 that, just before their divine deliverance, half of Jerusalem shall go forth into captivity. But Jehovah too shall go forth and fight against those nations as when He fought in the day of battle. Alas! one cannot expect faith as to the future from those who disbelieve His word about the past. This one scripture it seemed well to cite as decisive proof of Jewish captives, just before the close of man's and the beginning of Jehovah's day.

Here the antagonism of the modern critics to the truth becomes as evident as it is without excuse. Their theory totally breaks down. What historical circumstances furnished a ground for such a prediction? The critics fall back on one or other of the rival evasions of Jewish unbelief, in order to escape the varied and overwhelming proofs that the Holy Spirit sets forth the Lord Jesus in the expiatory sufferings and future earthly glory of the Messiah. Impossible to ask an accomplishment of the verses that close Isa. 52 and fill Isa. 53 more detailed or more comprehensive, more reflecting divine glory, more providing for the guilt and ruin, yet deliverance, of God's people through One Righteous Man a sacrifice for many. Every resource of hostile ingenuity in the east and in the west, of ancient times and of modern, has beaten upon this house; but it has not fallen, for it is founded on an impregnable rock,

around which are strewn the dishonoured remains of God's enemies.

The sole objection which has any appearance of truth is the difficulty to ignorant minds that all its scope is not yet fulfilled. But this could not be consistently with God's ways and counsels, and is the less reasonable, because of the prevalent trait of prophecy which regards the end of the age, when human departure from God meets its judgment, and righteousness shall reign universally to His glory. No display of grace can match the Saviour sacrificially dying for our sins on the cross; and what display of glory to compare with His coming forth from heaven to put down every foe and establish a kingdom which will embrace not only all the earth but all things in heaven also? Now the prophet, in presenting His humiliation and especially His death as an offering for sin does not fail to speak of His exaltation and height of glory when He is no longer hid in God but manifested to the nations, to the abasement of kings, and triumphant over the great and the strong. Christ at His First advent made clear what His then work was, and what remains to be made good at His Second. So He said, "First must He suffer many things and be rejected of this generation" (Luke 17), and "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory" (Luke 24)? God's ways are not as man's, who, if he aspire however high, lies down in sorrow, and closes in death; but Christ went down the willing Victim into death and judgment, in order to bear away sins righteously and lay, a basis for holy blessing even of the most guilty, never to be sullied by evil, and never to pass away; and this to the glory of God the Father.

These are Dr. D.'s words (p. 221): 1,62, 13-53,12 deals again with the figure of Jehovah's ideal Servant, and develops under a new aspect his character and work. It represents, namely, his great and surprising 'a exaltation, after an antecedent period of humiliation, suffering, and death, in which, it is repeatedly stated, he suffered, not (as those who saw him mistakenly imagined) for his own sins, but for the sins of others." Is it not distressing that a man should see and acknowledge so much which applies clearly, unmistakably, and exclusively to the Lord, and yet withhold the confession of His name? Who but Christ ever suffered from God for the sins of others? The italics even are his own. Yet not a word honestly lets out the truth of the One efficacious substitute for sinners, though "it is repeatedly stated" as he does not deny but confess throughout the passage. Hence the effort to apply it to Jeremiah, or to Josiah, is as vain as to conceive the Jews to be here so personified. They suffered for their own sins, as all scripture shows, and most justly. Nor has any nation been less patient even under God's chastenings, instead of suffering as a lamb without one spot or blemish or complaint. Even the more ancient Jewish interpretation points to the Messiah; and the evasions alluded to are modern comparatively (on the part of Rashi, D. Kimchi, Aben Ezra, as well as Saadiah Gaon and Abarbanel) through the strain of controversy with Christians. Their very Prayer-book testifies to this truth against them repeatedly.

And why is it that those baptised unto Christ and His death swerve from the evident aim of the prophecy with the more incredulous and antichristian Jews? Alas! it is the same spirit of error, the same antagonism to the

truth so humbling to man, so glorifying to God and His Son. Possibly Dr. D. allows that the prophecy, though not all accomplished yet, really refers to our Lord, as the N.T. everywhere attests. But if so, where is the vaunted necessity for showing a specially suitable occasion in Isaiah's age? Where the distinct bearing on contemporary interests? Is the situation presupposed that of any O.T. prophet's age any more than Isaiah's? Is not the predicted glory based upon a condition of things existent only in Christ's life, death, and resurrection? And is not this, the necessary conclusion, destructive of the neo-critical hypothesis in every form? The authoritative comment, the best interpretation, is the N.T., especially when we admit the light of the Lord's return from heaven to bless Israel and all the nations, times of restoring all things of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began.

Hence even Dr. D. cannot get rid of the impression. There is no frank confession of faith, no gratitude for mercy so rich as the prophecy expresses toward Israel, and the New Testament applies in the largest and surest way to all who now believe the gospel. Still it needs no argument to demonstrate that the atoning death of the Lord Jesus perfectly meets what was here predicted many centuries beforehand; and no Christian ought to question that the anticipated glory and blessing for the earth as its result will assuredly follow in due time, which the bulk of prophecy also awaits.

Isa. 54 looks on to that day. It was in no way applicable to the returned remnant from Babylon. The principle does apply and is applied to the grace of God bringing in so many unexpected children of Abraham as the gospel does by faith of Christ (Gal. 4). But the direct and

complete fulfilment can only be as a whole, when Israel's sorrows are ended, — and they are gathered and established in righteousness, as far from oppression as fear, and the Holy One of Israel shall be called indisputably the God of the whole earth. No one of intelligence will say that their bright expectation is realised; every believer may well rejoice that God will be thus gracious to Israel in a day that hastens, It cannot be till Christ comes again.

Isa. 55 opens the door of mercy to others beyond God's ancient people. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." When Jehovah intervenes to save Israel according to the prophet, it will be on principles of grace which will bless the Gentiles who feel their need and hearken to His word to the ends of the earth. It does and can not fully express the gospel now; because, for those who have been baptised and put on Christ now, there is neither Jew nor Greek, all being one in Christ; whereas in the new age Zion shall be no longer ploughed nor Jerusalem become heaps, but the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills, and peoples shall flow unto it as the religious centre of the whole earth. Then the first dominion, the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem, as indeed Jehovah shall reign in mount Zion henceforth: a state of things incompatible with the gospel.

Isa. 56, 57 consist of moral warnings, all the more impressed because of the grace which goes out so deeply yet so far and wide. For to grace evil is more offensive than to law which is its open condemnation.

God carefully guards His grace from the imputations which fallen nature would cast on it. Hence saith Jehovah, Keep ye judgment and do justice; for my salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed. Jehovah's salvation and righteousness prove to be the opposite of a licence to sin, as flesh might wish and think. The sabbath was, and will. be, so much the truer a test, because it flows from divine authority simply, not from the action of conscience which of itself condemns corruption or violence apart from God's commandment. Nor need any despair, however naturally powerless or distant. But grace is large, as well as holy and searching; and His house is to be open for the prayers of all who know and rejoice in Him Whom once they slighted in their ignorance.

Isa. 57 pursues the same consequences as to the Jew. In that day it will be plain beyond mistake that Israel have no immunity, as indeed they never had, however they may have nursed the fond delusion. Idolatry, strange to say, will reappear among the Jews during the end of the age, as the prophet here intimates, in a way contrasted with the eve of the return from Babylon or since; so too the Lord warns in Matt. 12:43-45. The captivity led to the going out of the unclean spirit from his house, and the empty, swept, and garnished state which characterised "that generation" ever since. But the rejection of the true Christ will have as its issue in the latter days the reception of the Antichrist (see also John 5:43), when the unclean spirit returns with seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Our Lord's application of the parable is indisputable: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked

generation." Never has the unclean spirit of idolatry returned to the Jew, still less with the full power of Satan in Antichrist. But as surely as the Lord spoke, it will be at the close of the age, when this prophecy also is to be accomplished. For the king" (ver. 9) is none other than that ominous personage who is then to be adored by the apostate people, as "idols" will also be (ver. 5). Compare Dan. 11:36-39: a prediction in the third year of Cyrus, never yet fulfilled, and expressly said to be "at the time of the end," just before the final deliverance, blessing, and glory of Israel here below "in the glorious land." What force does not all this give to the concluding words! "No peace, saith my God, to the wicked," When it was idolatry only with its moral effects, it was "Jehovah" as in Isa. 48:22; here, where is this darker sin of Messiah's rejection with its issues, it is "my God."

Isaiah 58

The last section of the great prophetic discourse here opens, running down to the end, but itself consisting of subdivisions which it is well to head. There is first a trenchant moral appeal to the house of Jacob in their combining sins and transgressions with punctilious regard to legal ordinances, especially fasting and sabbath-keeping, and yet total antagonism to their spirit (Isa. 58) There is at the close of that chapter, with Isaiah's wonted grandeur in recalling to true righteousness and the honour and blessing that would follow, the most forcible setting out of their entire corruption in Isa. 59 with all the amplitude of his early style. It was their own evil that separated the Jews and their God, their sins which hid His face from them that

He heard not. Thereon ensues confession of their sins, but no power to rise from their wretchedness, till Jehovah intervenes (identifying Himself with Christ, the Redeemer, in Zion) with deliverance for the godly remnant, who according to His covenant receive His Spirit and His words for themselves and their offspring evermore.

Zion accordingly is called to arise and shine, for her light is come and the glory of Jehovah risen upon her; and this the more strikingly that darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples (Isa. 60). So unfounded is the dream of Christendom that Israel's conversion is to be due to Gentile zeal or faith. On the contrary the apostacy shall first come, and the man of sin be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus slays or consumes with the breath of His mouth and brings to nought by the appearing of His advent. Both O.T. and N.T. are distinct that His personal judgment of the quick inaugurates the wondrous change for the earth, when not only shall all Israel be saved (after the destruction of the lawless one and his adherents, with other foes) but nations shall come to Zion's light and kings to the brightness of her rising. The picture of the future restoration, righteous and glorious here below, and this manifestly of Jerusalem and His people (though with marked difference from the heavenly city in Rev. 21, 22) is drawn, allowing for the new connection, exactly in Isaiah's manner, serene and sublime, and wholly different from the exilic or the post-exilic prophets. To interpret it of the church is not only unintelligent, but lowers our heavenly glory with Christ; it wrongs Israel and defrauds the Gentiles as a whole, to say nothing of the lower creation which God never forgets if man does.

Isa. 61-63:6 bring in Christ, not in His humiliation and atoning death, but in the incomparable grace of His first advent, and its blessed consequences not yet fulfilled to the Jews as such, and His indisputable power in judgment at the second when the day of vengeance is come. How instructive His own closing of the book in the synagogue of Nazareth, when He read only the first clause of Isa. 61:2! When He returns He begins with the day of vengeance before He gives effect to the year of His redeemed. See Isa. 62:4. The Reformers were no more enlightened than the Fathers who confounded Isa. 63 with 53 and the blood of the peoples with His blood.

But what we have had in this brief summary is wholly destructive of the unbelieving school. For, as we saw in the first previous or second section the Jew guilty not of idolatry only as in the past but of the rejection of the Messiah, so now the prophet treats of that pretentious but hollow Pharisaism which has ever since characterised them, and of the sure judgment which the rejected Messiah will inflict at His coming in power and glory. Dr. D. does not venture to apply the end of Isa. 59 or the beginning of Isa. 63 to the first advent. Even if he could with the smallest show of justice, how would this fall in with the assumption of an unknown prophet toward the close of the captivity? He knows quite well that the moral impediments which disqualify Israel for the enjoyment of the promised blessings have never yet been removed. He knows that the unreality of their fasts and other observances continues to this day, and that the true fast, so pleasant to Jehovah, of unselfish goodness and mercy is as far off as ever, when alone He can shower His blessings on His people, and they shall build the old wastes and raise up the foundations from

generation to generation, nay, delight in Jehovah Who will cause them to ride on the high places of the earth.

Not only does the apostle Paul cite the close of Isa. 59 modified by Ps. 53:6 (7) to prove the future coming of the Lord to save Israel (in Rom. 11), but he quotes also the earlier verses in Rom. 3 to demonstrate their utter moral ruin as a present fact. And this he meets with the grace of God in the gospel now to every believer; as he holds out the coming of the Redeemer by-and-by, when Israel shall be restored and have the kingdom according to prophecy.

Hence these self-styled higher critics betake themselves to "the felicity of the ideal Zion of the future," when, after a judgment to be enacted in the Jews, not in their foes only, the dark cloud of night that shrouds the rest of the world is lifted from the holy city, and light clothes Zion for ever. Then they talk, or at least Dr. D. does, of "Jehovah's ideal servant" once more introduced in Isa. 61, which is followed as before by the promise of Jerusalem's restoration, of the new and signal marks of Jehovah's favour resting on the restored nation, and of its own appreciation of all. Of course Isa. 63:1-6 is similarly treated, as "an ideal humiliation of nations, marshalled upon the territory of Israel's inveterate foe" (Lit. of the O.T. 222).

It would be more candid to let us know whether Dr. D. believes, any more than his German forerunners, in the reality of these predictions. If he does, the critical hypothesis is ipso facto overthrown and abandoned; if he does not, its infidel and anti-christian character is apparent. In any case, it is absurd to argue that the prophet is merely addressing "the exiles in Babylonia,"

any more than “the men of Jerusalem, contemporaries of Ahaz and Hezekiah or even of Manasseh” (p. 224). All this reasoning is the pettifoggery of rationalism with not even the semblance of truth. It is impossible for any man to face any one of these sections, still less the second and the third, and to say that the prophet speaks always, in the first instance, to his own contemporaries (though they were responsible to believe as we are). Let him show, if he can, that the prophet never abandons his now historical position but speaks from it, when he predicts the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that should follow them. If by “ideal” he honestly confesses both, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace, Founded on the vision of the judicial vintage, we have next the prophet’s intercession on behalf of the Israel of God, the godly remnant as hateful to their godless brethren after the flesh as to the nations, indeed more so. Past mercies are recalled; their relationship to Jehovah pleaded; their sins confessed. Israel had destroyed themselves by their ungrateful, persistent, and shameless iniquity. Who had called them to be His own people? He was unchanged, if Abraham and Israel could not own them. Was not Jehovah better to them, ruined as they justly were, than even all their fathers? And the supplication was deepening and more urgent through Isa. 64, which brings together the beginning of their national history on quitting Egypt with still more tremendous and comprehensive judgments that open their final deliverance and blessedness under their Messiah. Faith gives power to repentance; and mercy anticipated makes guilt hateful, as its accomplishment sharpens self-judgment to the uttermost. Hence the confession with which the plea is pressed on Him Who even from of old proclaimed

Himself Israel's Redeemer. All goes far beyond any historic dealings, and requires us to look to the end of the age when Jerusalem shall be no more trodden down of the Gentiles, and those with whom the prophet identifies himself abase themselves in the dust before Jehovah. "The set time" will soon come.

Isaiah 65, 66 are the answer to the supplication. Far from slight of Israel, Jehovah had meanwhile been inquired of by those that asked not — been found of those that sought Him not. It is the intermediate call of the Gentiles by the gospel. "I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people that walk in a way not good, after their own thoughts." The only true sense is that given by the apostle in Rom. 10:20, 21: "Isaiah is very bold and saith, I was found of them that sought me not, I became manifest unto them that asked not of me. But unto Israel he saith, All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The evasive efforts of the Rabbis, as well as of Grotius, Gesenius, Hahn, Hendewerk, etc., are deplorable. Nor need any believer wonder at Dr. D.'s silence (Lit. O.T. 223); for the inspired interpretation seals the unbelief and folly of rationalism, ever retreating from the light of God into nature's darkness. To those who accept the apostle's comment as the end of controversy, the conclusion only falls in with and confirms what we have learnt by many proofs in the prophecy itself; that here we are in presence of the Jews cast off, not for their idolatry only but for their rejection of the Messiah, and of Gentiles meanwhile called by sovereign grace, before mercy intervenes at the end of the age to restore Israel, when the Gentile, not

continuing in goodness but high-minded, shall become the object of unsparing judgment. And the moment hastens.

But in that day it will be made apparent even to themselves that not all are Israel which are of Israel. Mere flesh will prove vain. Jewish antipathy to idols (so strong after the Babylonish captivity, stronger still after the Roman conquest, and seemingly strongest of all in presence of Popish corruption and persecution) will yield to the latter-day apostacy, with the yet worse enormity of worshipping Antichrist, as already shown. So we find here, not without Pharisaism. But Jehovah will bring forth a seed to possess His mountains, His elect, His servants, His people that have sought Him. Hence while those that forsake Jehovah, shall be numbered to the sword, His servants shall sing aloud and triumph in the exaltation of His name. For all is to be made new, of which Jerusalem's joy is the proof and pledge, and her weeping is no more, death being the exception and then only as a curse. The connection, with Isa. 11, 12, 24-27 and 35 is marked; all converge on the day when Jehovah reigns, earth is glad, and glory dwells in Israel's land.

To interpret all this of the return from the captivity is infatuation, which directly tempts such commentators to the sin of imputing exaggeration to the prophet. The root of all is the groundless limiting of prophecy to events close at hand. The truth is that the Holy Spirit, having convicted the favoured people both of idolatry and of the rejection of Messiah, looks on to the catastrophe which closes their evil career, and brings out a generation to come, in the solemn end of the age. Then a voice from the city, a voice from the temple, a

voice of Jehovah that rendereth recompence to His enemies! There will be no more delay. But the day that sees a land brought forth, and a nation born at once in the godly Jewish remnant, whom their brethren hated and cast out for His name, shall behold Jehovah come with fire and His chariots like a whirlwind to render His anger with fury and His rebukes with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword will Jehovah enter into judgment with all flesh. It is expressly the day come for the gathering, “Of all nations and tongues, when they shall see his glory. The restoration of His people coalesces in time with His judgment of the nations. And the blessing thenceforth of Israel is to be permanent. “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith Jehovah. so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass from new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, saith Jehovah. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorrence unto all flesh” (Isa. 66).

What has all this to do with the close of the exile? The prediction of the Messiah is incomparably fuller than of Cyrus, and the setting forth of His unparalleled humiliation and sufferings as a sacrifice for the sins of His people no less plain than of His exaltation over kings and peoples, His judgment not only of the nations but of the wicked in Israel, where Jehovah’s hand shall be known toward His servants as surely as His indignation toward His foes. It is merely trifling with a serious reader and with scripture to say “that these chapters

[40-66] form a continuous prophecy, dealing throughout with a common theme, viz. Israel's restoration from exile in Babylon" (Lit. O.T. 217).

There are distinct themes, as we have seen, in the three sections of this great prophetic strain. All three look to the triumph of divine grace in Israel on their recognition of overwhelming sin. The first section alone (Isa. 40-48) notices Babylon, Cyrus, and the Return; but even it goes far beyond all that was then realised. The second (Isa. 49-57) charges the people with wickedness worse than idolatry through the same evil heart of unbelief in departing from a living God. The third and last shows the terrible result for the wicked pursued to the and of the age, when Jehovah, delivers and blesses the godly with glory in the land, as He punishes signally the apostate trangressors. It will be a day of judgment and of blessing for all flesh; and it is idle to deny that it still awaits fulfilment. Compare vers. 6-9, and 15, 16.

If one believes all this, the grounds for questioning Isaiah's authorship, and imagining another unknown prophet a century after, sink into total insignificance. The mainstay of the argument is disproved and excluded. The prophecy as certainly treats of the Saviour's atoning death and exaltation in the second part as of Babylon's fall under Cyrus in the first. And the third part sets forth the judgment on the evil and the restoration of Israel, which are still future. "Where is the disputer?"

"The servant" is the key note to all three parts; and we thus learn why "the king" would not be so appropriate here. For in the first part we have Israel the responsible servant, but altogether failing; the blind people that

have eyes, and the deaf that have ears, therefore become a prey and given to the robbers. Then in the second, Messiah is substituted for Israel, formed to be His servant, as indeed already said to be His elect in Whom His soul delighted. And if man despise and the nation abhor Him, and if Israel be not gathered, Jehovah has given Him to be for a light of the nations, His salvation to the end of the earth. The gathering of Israel awaits another day; and this comes out fully in the third part, where they discover their sins and recognise in the Redeemer Who comes to Zion Jehovah's righteous Servant; and are owned themselves now at length as His servants, His elect, when He will recompense the iniquities of their brethren and of their fathers into their bosom.

It is perfectly certain that the Messiah is the King of Isa. 9; 67, Isa. 32:1, and the Servant of Isa. 49-53; and it is quite true that the figure of the Servant rather than of King is here required, in order to give force to these three parts of this wonderful prophecy. Isa. 11:2 and Isa. 61:1, if compared, show how the two truths meet in the power of the Spirit of Jehovah that rested on Him: a clear evidence of the unity of the entire book. It is in Him the perfection of a Servant was found in the face of contempt and hatred, suffering and death; it is through His grace that the faithless shall yet become faithful servants, in that day afflicted and contrite in spirit, and trembling at His word. They will behold the great High Priest emerging from the sanctuary. Ours is a better portion, for we in spirit follow where He is on high, believing the things which are now reported to us through those that preached the gospel to us by (ἐν) the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven.

Appendix

It remains to notice briefly, but perhaps sufficiently and in plain terms for the Christian, the effort to find grounds in the language of the book against its unity; which we have seen to be evident enough from its consistent scope and unequalled grandeur throughout. Here those who disbelieve and deride what they call verbal i.e. plenary inspiration descend to points minute enough. But revelation has nothing to fear from criticism high or low, provided it be candid and comprehensive as well as complete. Reverent and believing were too much to ask; for the obedience of faith is incompatible alike with the theory and the practice of the soi-disant higher critics. They start with incredulity, latent only to themselves and their school, to end, unless grace intervene, in the depths of lawless thought and rebellion against God.

Here Professor Cheyne is more moderate than his fellows, and admits that “the peculiar expressions of the later prophecies are, on the whole, not such as to necessitate a different linguistic stage from the historical Isaiah; and that, consequently, the decision of the critical question will mainly depend on other than purely linguistic considerations” (The Prophecies of Isaiah). Third Ed. p. 234), Professor Driver differs and is much more confident, though well aware that the rationalistic hypothesis used to rest mainly on its assumption that prophecy is necessarily limited to the near future: phraseology was only added as a make-weight. Indeed it was argued by some against the latter chapters that they were a studied imitation of the style of the earlier. Delitzsch, though he weakly wavered at last, never recanted the judgment that, so far as regards

language, nothing in the O.T. is more finished or elevated than the disputed close of this prophecy. He used to affirm that its ethereal character was in a state of continuous formation throughout the course of all that precedes. This witness is true. Does it suit the close of this exile?

But Dr. D. (Lit. O.T. 225-227) descends to detail and points out, first, the words or forms of expression in Isa. 40-66. (as some at least in Isa. 13 and 34), not in the unquestioned writings of Isaiah; secondly, eight words alleged to have a meaning other than therein; and three other differing features of style. Now every one of these alleged peculiarities is due to the new and enlarged character of the final trilogy, which demanded more moral and spiritual expressions than the short, separate, and generally limited range comprehended in the first half of the book. So it is for God's choice of Israel and of Messiah, for praise, pleasure, goodwill, rejoicing, shooting forth, and breaking out, "thy sons" said of Zion and the predictions of Jehovah, especially with a participle. Again, the new modifications of "isles or coasts," "nought," "offering," "justice," "breaking," and "decking," with phrases expressive of His future intervention in power of stipulated grace, ought to he no difficulty to any thoughtful mind, any more than impassioned appeals, repetitions, or omissions. To tie down such a soul as Isaiah to a servile sameness, to deny the unity of his pen because he rises to a higher strain when he is the instrument of revealing loftier hopes on a deeper basis, centring in the Messiah, and issuing in new heavens and a new earth, is a dream worthy only of an unbeliever. So the same spirit has hacked Homer; it might have split up Horace with more

show of reason, had he not written his varied compositions so late in the day. Could our own poets Shakespeare and Milton, if severed from that day by a millenary or two, have escaped the like pseudo-criticism? To set grandeur against pathos, or force against persuasion, as incompatible with one great vision, is real short-sightedness. The case called for larger and fuller ideas than in the earlier words and "burdens." Jehovah infinite and incomparable, First and Last, is exactly in due place. So is Messiah the Servant in divine grace and unparalleled suffering, after the failure of Israel the responsible servant, and the wondrous mercy which is to form a faithful remnant, His elect servants, at the end and for ever through their once despised but then to be adored Messiah.

How different from Jeremiah the real prophet writing toward the beginning, to say nothing of the close, of the exile! Between him and Isaiah we do find beyond controversy the most marked differences of thought, phraseology, and style. Had the concluding portion of the prophecy emanated from a writer long after Jeremiah or Ezekiel, we should have expected differences far more decided and unmistakable, not merely because of a century later but from the throes and humiliation of a long national exile: strange circumstances for such an unparalleled flow as that of the later prophecy of Isaiah.

But this is not all. Not only are the words or modifications of meaning, as far as really new to the later discourse, fully accounted for by the fresh aspects of the truth revealed, so that the objections compiled by Dr. Davidson and selected by Dr. Driver are demonstrably invalid; but it has been shown over and

over that there are deeply rooted similarities which bind together the first half with the closing strain. And they are exceedingly numerous and minute as well as distinctive; so as to indicate identity. Thus under the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet alone the late Mr. Birks pointed out some forty words in which Isa. 40-66 resemble the earlier prophecies, which do not appear at all, or with the slightest exception, in the writings toward the close of the Exile or after it. The true inference on this ground is therefore for the unity of the entire book as emanating from Isaiah. Nor does it lie only in bare words of a peculiar and striking kind, but in characteristic phrases which bespeak our prophet's mind and manner unmistakably. There "the Holy One of Israel" occurs with great frequency, and almost equally in the first and in the second half of the book; whereas (the corresponding part of 2 Kings excepted, as being Isaiah's) we elsewhere find it but thrice in the Psalms and twice in Jeremiah. So the rarer "Mighty One of Israel" is found in both portions; elsewhere only in Genesis 49:24, Ps. 132:2, 5, as has been observed. Again, "your God" alone occurs in both, elsewhere only with "Jehovah" preceding. A still more salient instance noticed is the phrase, "Jehovah will say," three times in the earlier prophecies (Isa. 1:11, 18; Isa. 33:10), and five times in the later (Isa. 40:1, 25; Isa. 41:21; Isa. 58:9; Isa. 67:9). This future form occurs elsewhere but once (Ps. 12:6), the past tense very often indeed. Is it not a strong mark of one hand? If any desire a fuller setting out of the testimony of the language, they may find it in Mr. William Urwik's interesting essay on "The Servant of Jehovah" (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1877), especially in pp. 29-48; where the cautiously stated conclusion is, that the linguistic evidence, viewed by itself even, does

not sanction but rather forbids, the difference of date and authorship which some modern critics claim for the two portions.

Yet the difference of style and language would naturally have been most palpable, if the assumption were true that the historic Isaiah of the earlier half flourished in Hezekiah's days, the pseudo-Isaiah of the rationalists toward the close of the Exile and after the Return. And the more manifestly so, as we have Ezekiel at Chebar, and Daniel in Shushan or in Babylon, with whose writings to compare those alleged to be written practically at the same time and place. But how utterly different from either, Isa. 13, 14, 21, 24-27, 34, or the later prophecy! Contrast, not resemblance, is on the surface and underneath it. They breathe an Asiatic air, not the Hebrew of all Isaiah. The comparatively unadorned style of the statesman in one, yet announcing the kingdom of heaven to be wielded by the Son of Man, after all the imperial system has been destroyed with offshoot successors, is undeniable in the one. The gorgeous imagery of the other turns the proud and idolatrous splendour of the Assyrian palaces into the service of God's throne, treating the symbols as mere attributes, and agents of Him Who sat there, then judging and leaving Jerusalem for a while (Ezek. 1-11), to return at the end of the age, and make it the everlasting seat of His presence and earthly glory (Isa. 40-48) Both prophecies fit exactly the two writers and reflect perfectly their times and places, as they reveal the suited truth for the yet future glory of God in Israel and all the earth. And if we add the earlier prophecies of the mourning prophet who was given to see the Exile begin, and the sins and shame of the unrepentant

remnant in Palestine and Egypt, the difference is complete with Isaiah, late or early, who stands alone and unapproached by any other, whether during the storm of the terrible Assyrian, or after it in days of peace and truth, with the Babylonish captivity before his eyes, and not Cyrus only as a comparatively near deliverer, but the Servant of Jehovah Who should suffer unto death for sin, but be exalted and extolled and very high, sprinkling many nations and kings abashed at His glory.

1 Names, numerals, and the like are peculiarly liable to error in transcription, Man's custody or use of scripture is essentially distinct from inspiration: only ignorance or fraud confounds them. What evidence have they against the title's genuineness or authenticity save their subjective idea or self-will?

2 Those conversant with unaccomplished prophecy will see in the fall of Shebna, and Eliakim taking his place in David's house, the type, in that day of future blessing, of the true Christ superseding Antichrist, Compare Rev. 3:7 for the key.