

his nation from the beginning of its history. The gift of God to Israel was not resurrection from the dead, but continuance of life. 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' Not for one moment did God cease to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore not for one moment were they dead. When Christ came, He came to renew the offer of the gift. 'I came that they may have—not resurrection but—life, and that they may have it abundantly.'

And if the gift of God to Israel was not resurrection, still less was it the resurrection of the body. The body was not in it. It was 'life eternal,'

the undying life of the man. Says Dr. George Matheson (and Dr. George Matheson in his blindness has a wonderful way of seeing into the heart of things): 'It was not the sight of a dead body that made the Jew a sceptic; it was the sight of a dead soul.' The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Enoch did not die because he did not sin. He gained the desire of the heart of every true Israelite, an unbroken fellowship with God. He was with God here. When God removed him, he was with God there. So far as our eyes could follow him he was not, for God took him; but He took him to be ever with the Lord.

Messianic Prophecy.

BY THE REV. R. BRUCE TAYLOR, M.A., ABERDEEN.

THE full extent of the change that criticism has made upon the interpretation of the Old Testament is grasped only when men have to use the Scriptures for ordinary homiletic purposes. In the prophetic books a method of interpretation that was accepted as almost axiomatic has been so attacked as, in its rigid form at all events, to have been utterly discredited. The prophets spoke first of all to the men and to the circumstances of their own day; but the passages in them that had much the greater interest for our forefathers were those that were distinctively predictive. The violence of the reaction from a fanciful and unhistoric reading of prophecy has in our time created difficulties peculiar to itself, and in our bewilderment we are sometimes inclined to wonder whether any single passage whatever can be supposed to have been spoken with the consciousness of a personal Messiah who was to come. A return to the sources, and a careful inquiry into their meaning in the light of all that criticism has to say, will go far to steady faith and to deepen belief in the essential inspiration of the Scriptures.

From very early times in Israel's history we find a persistent conviction that the people stood in a special relationship to God. There was more in this than the mere exuberance of patriotism; the relationship was held to have been instituted, not for

political, but for moral ends. The nation had been chosen for purposes that it only dimly saw, but yet it had the sense of having a unique work to do. This special relationship was established, the historical books say, by a series of covenants. Wellhausen may be right in arguing that the term 'Covenant' came into use only shortly before the Exile, but at all events the thing denoted by the *b'rit* existed from the earliest days of the people's conscious history. It was in this regard that they interpreted the Exodus from Egypt, and the belief has come down as well in the ancient national ballads—

For the portion of Jehovah is His people;
Jacob the measure of His heritage.
He found him in a land of the desert,
In a waste, in a howling wilderness;
He encompassed him, He distinguished him,
He watched him as the apple of His eye;
As an eagle stirreth his nest,
Fluttereth over his young,
Spreadeth abroad his wings, taketh them,
Beareth them up on his pinions:
Jehovah alone did lead him,
And no strange God was with him.—Dt 32⁹⁻¹².

For a long time it was the nation as a whole that was thought of as the object of God's choice and as the instrument of His purposes of grace to the world; and indeed, while the Messianic idea

took many forms in subsequent days, this conception of the whole nation as the redeeming element in history appeared in one dress or another until the time of Christ, and is the moving force of the Zionism of to-day. But two points in this national history, (a) the establishment of the kingship under David, and (b) the sinking of the national hopes during the Exile, conditioned the most striking forms of the Messianic prospect.

(a) The greatness of David is to be judged, not so much from the immediate history that we have of him, as from the impress that he left upon the people's imagination. He was a great warrior, but it was not his military prowess that gave him his place in national memory and song. He was accessible to his people; his sympathies were their sympathies; his daily interests were theirs. The tradition that he was the sweet singer of Israel and the source of the most spiritual of the people's songs, cannot be altogether without foundation. It was the qualities of his heart that brought him so near the men he governed. His friendship for Jonathan became typical of all true friendship. It is with the deepest tenderness that the sorrows of his home are spoken of; the historian who recorded the death of Absalom was himself touched to tears as he recalled the father's grief. It was to David as the type of a nation's deliverer that the imagination of the pious recurred for many a century after his death. The Oriental has never been able to understand a constitutional government that would evidence itself mainly in its care for the permanence of institutions. He must have a visible king, a despot, a man whose word shall be the final authority. And so in the harassed days of the separated kingdoms, when the forces of Israel, too small under any circumstances to oppose the great Northern powers, were still further weakened by division, when the kings they had were godless and careless of their people's welfare, good men looked back to the days of the undivided rule, to the king who had served God and honoured them, and they felt that when the good time came it would evidence itself in the renewed glory of the house of David, with whom God had made His compact.

Thus Amos and Hosea (Am 9^{11f}. Hos 3⁵) expect not the coming of a Messiah, but the splendour of David's days and the reunion of all the tribes under a king of his line. The whole conception of the Messiah receives a great deepening in the

prophecy of Immanuel's birth, and in the prophecy of the Four Names. The former of these, 'Behold a young woman is with child (cf. Gn 16), and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel, that is to say, "God with us,"' must not be adduced as a testimony to the Virgin Birth. The word '*almah*' means not a 'virgin,' but a 'young woman.' What the prophet does say is, that before this lad, who is presently to be born, has arrived at years of discretion, the land is to be devastated by the Assyrian, cultivation is to cease, cattle will graze where the crops formerly waved, so that Immanuel shall eat 'milk and honey,' the scanty produce of a land that has been allowed to run wild. The great interest of the prophecy, apart from the fulfilment which the Church has seen in it of Christ, lies in the presentation of the Messiah no longer as the conquering king, but as a *sufferer* for the sins of others. The prophetic vision has not yet reached the point of seeing in the Messiah the one who shall expiate sin by His suffering; but it is obvious that the old idea of the Messianic time as the day of restored temporal glory has passed away. Under the pressure of the circumstances of history, prophecy is deepening. In chap. 9¹⁻⁸ Isaiah comes back to describe more fully this deliverer in the characteristics that he shall present. He is to reign upon the throne of David; the kingdom is still to be an earthly one, but he is to have qualities that shall make him ruler, not only over the land, but over the hearts and consciences of men. He shall be called 'Wonder-Counsellor, God-Hero, Father-Everlasting, Prince-of-Peace,' These words were spoken to definite historical conditions, but they reach beyond them. Isaiah is certain that deliverance is coming soon, that it is coming by the ordinary channel of a human birth through one who, 'after passing through a period of suffering consequent on his people's sins, shall prove their saviour, ruler, and quickener of all their life; and his influence as a saviour is of course described in terms in which the Church of that age could understand it, deliverance from the power of Assyria, and the gifts of peace and justice' (G. A. Smith, 'Messianic Prophecy,' in *Bible Readers' Manual*).

And now, passing over Zec. 9-11, where the Messiah is represented as the Prince of Peace entering Jerusalem riding upon an ass (the ass symbolizing not humility but the mission of peace), and passing over Jeremiah as well,—

Jeremiah who, along with his great word of the 'new covenant written on the heart,' holds to the conception that 'David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel (Jer 33¹⁷),—we come to—

(b) The Prophet of the Exile. It can only be said in making this great leap over so many prophecies upon which an exhaustive study of this subject would require to pause so long, that we observe the increasingly depressed political conditions of the nation reflected in the changing and diminishing place that the King, as the Messianic agent, takes. Isaiah, as we have seen, thinks of one born into suffering who yet shall vindicate his kingship—an assurance so finely expressed in the prophetic perfects, the very genius of the Hebrew language coming to the aid of the utterance of faith: 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined' (Is 9²). Jeremiah is not so certain about the individual Messianic king; rather does he expect a succession of kings of the house of David. But Zephaniah, Zec 12-14, Obadiah, Is 24-27 do not mention the Messianic kingship at all. By their time the kingship, as represented in the kings they had known, had lost all the confidence of the people. And when the nation was swallowed up in the Babylonian Empire, the negative thinking with regard to the king gives way, now that the kingship has vanished, to the wonderful conception of the suffering Servant of the Lord. 'The Exile cut the history of the people of Israel in two' (Davidson). The question that presses now on the spiritual man is no longer that of the king, and of the nation, and of the sacrifice as the expression of joyous service to God, but that of the individual and his personal relation to the Most High; and that relation as mediated not only by the personal consecration of the pious, but by the vicarious suffering of the innocent on behalf of the guilty. The question has been raised whether the suffering Servant is the nation or an individual. In many places the suffering Servant certainly is the nation, not the whole of the nation, but the godly in it. It was not those who sat light to religious truth that felt the deportation to Babylon most. It was they to whom Zion had been, in truth, the dwelling-place of God, and to whom the daily services and sacrifices had been of the very substance of communion with Him, who were

bowed down under this separation from those hallowed associations. As the prophet looked out upon his people, he saw that, by sin, this punishment had come upon them; but he saw as well that the punishment was borne not by those who had invited it, but by the godly few. The chastisement had to be exhausted not upon the multitude that had deserved it, but upon a generation innocent of their sins. It was the substitute for the many guilty. But gradually the idea took a more concrete form. The suffering people became individualized in one man, misunderstood, mocked at, considered to be in special measure lying under the wrath of God, and yet expiating in himself the sin of many. Historically the prophet spoke what was true of his own time. The sin of the ungodly was, in point of fact, expiated by the suffering of the godly. But in his profound spiritual insight he spoke, without knowing it, what was true for all time. It is by the suffering of the righteous that there is any such thing as a spiritual succession.

It lies outside the scope of the present article to trace the history of the Messianic idea in the Jewish apocalyptic literature produced in the period immediately preceding the Christian era. That is a subject which itself merits full treatment, but at present we pass on to remark that, when Christ came, there was great vagueness in the ideas that prevailed about the Messiah. The conception of the prophet of the Exile—the deepest thing in the Old Testament—was not in men's thoughts at all. That the Messiah should suffer was never dreamed of. His own disciples, who might have been expected to have seen the trend of His character, could not understand the references to His suffering. We do gather from the Gospels that His Coming was expected to be *mysterious*. 'Howbeit, we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is' (Jn 7²⁷). There was a Jewish proverb which said: 'Three things come wholly unexpected, Messiah, a God-send, and a scorpion'; while according to another tradition, Messiah would not even know His own mission till He was anointed by Elijah (Westcott on Jn 7²⁷). There was also a steady expectation that the Messiah when He came would *work miracles*. 'When John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for

another' (Mt 11^{2f.}). And again in Jn 7³¹: 'Many of the people believed on him; and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more signs than these which this man hath done?' But the expectation of the time had no inwardness in it. It was a far poorer thing than the idea of the prophet nearly five hundred years before.

Jesus Himself had no doubt as to His Messiahship. The humblest of all mankind, He put forward this astounding claim that in Himself were realized the aspirations of the Chosen People through so many hundreds of years. It was not only that He claimed to have fulfilled in Himself certain predictions. The whole of the Old Testament witnessed to Him, He said. 'Search the Scriptures; they are they which testify of me' (Jn 5³⁹). Again, He says (Mt 26⁵⁴) 'How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?'—where the implication is that what is written of Him must be fulfilled. The prophecy, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,' He interpreted of Himself. He accepted the term Servant, 'But I am among you as he that serveth' (Lk 22²⁷). His disciples understood the reference in the same way, and used it as the explanation of His methods. 'Behold my servant . . . he shall not strive' (Mt 12^{18, 19}). Apart from the confession of St. Peter, the apostles claimed that in Him Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled. They style Him 'God's servant, Jesus'; 'Thy holy servant, Jesus' (Ac 3^{13, 26} 4²⁷⁻³⁰). St. Stephen, in calling Him 'the righteous one,' obviously refers to Is 53¹¹. The correspondence between the suffering described in Is 53, and the actual circumstances of Christ's trial and death, needs no vindication. What is of yet deeper significance is the way in which the New Testament accepts the view of the prophet of the Exile that the servant in his own suffering expiates the sin of the people. Christ Himself deliberately adopted the reference. He came 'to give His life a ransom for many' (Mt 20²⁸). 'This is my body broken for you' (1 Co 11²⁴). 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins' (Mt 26²⁸). St. Paul refers many times to the vicariousness of Christ's sacrifice of Himself; while the First Epistle of St. Peter is very largely an application of Is 53 to our Lord.

And now, in conclusion, we must try to meet the question that keeps haunting the man who

seriously studies this subject of Messianic Prophecy. Had the prophets, many of whose forecasts have so unmistakably been fulfilled, any distinct knowledge of the events they foretold? Had they any means of judging and weighing the future other than those which are given to every man of a true moral sense? Many times their prophecies were fulfilled in the most wonderful way; but, on the other hand, many of their prophecies were unfulfilled at the time, and the conditions of their fulfilment now seem to be forever past. Were the successful predictions, then, literary and moral accidents? The most diverse answers are, of course, given to this question. Wellhausen's whole point of view is that the prophets saw only so far as they were illuminated by an earnest moral sense. In times of peace they were silent; it was only when things were threatening that the prophet spoke. Smend, on the other hand, while going along with Wellhausen in his critical views, finds that in prophecy there is an inexplicable element which must remain a secret with God (*Alttest. Relig.-Gesch.* p. 164).

Was Messianic Prophecy a pure idealism then? Or had it a definite condition of things in view? Did good men, impressed with the hopelessness of the present, simply cast their minds forward and give each his own picture of the best he could imagine? Or was there in the mind of the prophet a distinct presentiment of the Messiah and of the Messianic time? Did the prophet consciously see something that was hidden from the ordinary man?

It must be allowed that the prophets felt themselves to be speaking the absolute truth as God had shown it to them. When they prophesied, they believed they had the Word of God in their mouth. Their quarrel with the false prophets was that those prophets spoke what was not put into their hearts by God, but what they imagined would be pleasing and comforting to those in authority. Not only did the prophets believe themselves to be speaking the truth, but they felt that when the word came to them they could not keep silence. They spoke because the Lord compelled them to speak (Am 3⁸, Jer 20⁹), and what they spoke was the Word of God.

But over against this subjective certainty of the prophet is to be set the fact that in all prophecy there was a *temporal* element. It was the known

that conditioned the prophet's picture of the future. He had to take his footing on the nation's own heritage of thought. He did not intrude on their life as a foreigner; he shared their circle of ideas. In his prophecy concerning the future his scheme of things was largely cast in the mould of the political conditions in which he lived. Was there a king at the head of the State, then the Messiah presented himself in the guise of a king. Had the king vanished from the political vision, then the Messiah appeared to his view as the holy man, or as the religious element in the nation personified. Thus Messianic Prophecy is a continually changing thing, with many different presentations, all realized in Christ as we now see, but not capable of being embraced within one view by the Jew, say of the time of the Maccabees.

Nor is this all. The student of prophecy finds that a great many prophecies have never been fulfilled; history has taken another course altogether. He finds, too, that the forecasts of prophets who were contemporaries are inconsistent, and that readings of history, mutually destructive, are given by prophets living almost side by side. Nahum prophesied that, through the siege of Nineveh, Judah would finally be saved. Habakkuk placed his hope upon the destruction of the kingdom of Babylon; while the Babylonian was to Jeremiah, on the other hand, the messenger of God in the laying waste of Jerusalem. The prophets expected, too, that the Messianic time to which they were pointing would *speedily* come. 'Prophecy compresses great momenta into a brief space, which brings up great movements close upon the back of one another, and takes them all in at one glance of the eye. This peculiarity some writers on prophecy have called its perspective, or, to use an expression of Delitzsch, the foreshortening of the prophet's horizon' (Davidson, *O.T. Prophecy*, p. 353). Thus Isaiah sees in one glance, as a rapid sequence of events, the darkness of the Assyrian invasion, the sudden breaking of the light, and the endless duration of the reign of the Prince of Peace—the Messiah's kingdom established immediately on the ruins left by the Assyrians. In considering the predictive power of the prophets we have thus on the one side their personal conviction that they were speaking the truth, and the justification that their prophecies in essence had in the Person of the Messiah; while, on the other side, we have the fact that they were sometimes mistaken in their

historical forecasts, and that while one prophet might be quite certain that one particular event was about to ensue, another, equally earnest in his reading of the times, might be equally certain of an entirely different upshot.

In view of these facts, we need to draw a distinction between the immediate and the ultimate fulfilment of prophecy; or, as Davidson draws it, between prophecy itself and the fulfilment of prophecy. The prophet had to express everlasting moral principles by means of the materials that lay to his hand both in historical circumstances and in the modes of thought that his time understood. There was thus a temporal as well as an eternal element in prophecy. The message of the suffering Servant would have conveyed no meaning to the Israelite of the day of Amos, as, on the other hand, the thought of a restored earthly kingship had clean passed from the mental horizon of the prophet of the Exile. We cannot hold that the inspiration of the prophet included the revelation to him of the historical details of the times that were to follow his. Several most remarkable predictions had their full justification in subsequent events; but it is not fair inquiry to lay stress upon these to the neglect of the many other prophecies that remained unfulfilled. The historical predictions were the clothing of eternal ideas, and those ideas stood and stand even though the wrapping of them may have changed greatly within the period of the prophetic utterance. The human body is continually renewing itself, faculties develop and wane, the purposes that seemed to be within our grasp in youth fade from us in middle age, the course that our minds had resolved on is so modified by circumstances that we seem to be almost the play of chance. And yet the personality remains the same; the change of circumstance does not alter the moral endeavour; the gradual failure of the physical powers does not imply the surrender of the will, nay, more, may serve as a relief to bring out the power of character. So in prophecy the external thing was constantly changing. Could we have roused from their graves the prophets from Amos to Malachi, and have asked them to give us their view of the future from the standpoint of the times in which they had lived, it would have been a parliament of discordant voices. Isaiah would have reproached Jeremiah for want of patriotism in advising that the gates should be thrown open to the invader.

The prophet of the Exile might have said to both that in expecting a king to reign over this denationalized people they were only cherishing a pious dream. For in prophecy the *clothing* of the idea was the temporal thing, and inspiration, in the sense of the correct reading of the future, did not appertain to it. The great religious conceptions that the historical details clothed were the permanent things. In them was the inspiration of the Most High. In speaking of them the prophets spoke better than they knew. The prophets as they spoke of the coming king, of the purified nation, of the holy man of God, of the suffering Servant, had no consistent idea of the actual Messiah who was to be. Their various conceptions, indeed, seemed to be self-contradictory, unable to be combined in any one character. We fail to consider, we who have been trained to see in Christ the fulfilment of the promise of the Messiah, how marvellous the fulfilment of that promise was. We import our knowledge of Christ into the conscious conceptions of the prophets. But the prophets saw nothing of this; and yet each in his own measure, underneath the historical circumstances of his day, was expressing, as God

had put it into his heart, the idea that was afterwards to be made actual in the Messiah.

It was in this that the inspiration of the prophets lay. To understand it we must begin with Christ and work backward, seeing at each stage the development of the Messianic idea that was to eventuate in the Messiah. Just as it is through man, the highest product of evolution, that we can see the meaning of many of the processes in the lower creation that without the completion of them all in him would seem purposeless, so it is through Christ, in whom religion became absolute, perfect, that we can comprehend the contribution that each prophet, under the guise of the temporal, made to the completion of the spiritual idea. Herein is the inspiration of God; not in the predictions concerning historical details, not in the political forecasts, but in the enunciation underneath those things, and with the full meaning of their words not understood by the men who spoke them, of the principles of the kingship of God, of His power over a nation's life, of His nearness to His own people, of His willingness to substitute His own suffering for theirs, those principles realized in flesh and blood in His own Son, Jesus Christ.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF JEREMIAH.

JEREMIAH VIII. 20.

'The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.'—R.V.

EXPOSITION.

'The harvest is past.'—These again are the words of the people, whose despair at being thus rejected by God takes the form of a proverb.—COOK.

'The summer is ended, and we are not saved.'—In Is 16⁹, Jer 40¹⁰, and elsewhere the word 'summer' is rendered by 'summer fruits.' The 'summer' (better *the fruit-gathering*) is ended, and yet they are not saved from misery and death. All has failed alike. The whole formula had probably become proverbial for extremest misery. It is well to remember that the barley-harvest coincided with the Passover, the wheat-harvest with Pentecost, the fruit-gathering with the autumn Feast of Tabernacles.—PLUMPTRE.

WHEN the harvest was over and the fruit-gathering ended, the husbandmen looked for a quiet time of refreshment. Judah had had its 'harvest-time' and then its 'fruit-gathering'; its needs had been gradually increasing, and,

on the analogy of previous deliverances (cf. Is 18⁴ 33¹⁰), it might have been expected that God would have interposed, His help being only delayed in order to be the more signally supernatural. But *we are not saved* (or rather, delivered).—T. K. CHEYNE.

THE SERMON.

The Prophet's Lament.

By the Rev. S. A. Tipple.

No prophet ever carried a sadder or heavier burden than Jeremiah. He was timid and sensitive, but he had to become a 'man of contention.' His message was one of disaster, and his cry was ever 'No hope, no hope.' Judgment had been foretold against Judah, and the fears of the people had been aroused and they had plunged into religious activity to avert their punishment. And now they were self-satisfied once more—they had